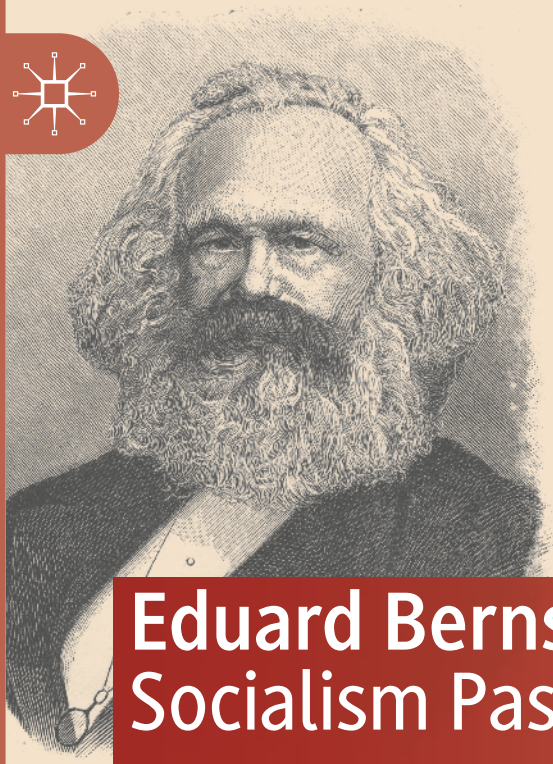

Eduard Bernstein on Socialism Past and Present

Essays and Lectures on Ideology

Marius S. Ostrowski

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Marius S. Ostrowski

By the turn of the twentieth century, the socialist movement and its governing ideology were being forced to confront an increasingly drastic challenge to their social claims and ambitions. Yet *prima facie*, the course of the movement's development in the latter half of the nineteenth century offered ample grounds for hope and optimism about its future prospects. The story of socialism in this period is one of at times seemingly miraculous survival—endurance, recovery, and even flourishing in the face of a relentless barrage of obstacles and setbacks. By any measure, the period began in the most inauspicious possible way. The crushing defeat of the 1848–1849 revolutions in Western and Central Europe—in which socialists, communists, and other radicals found themselves and their demands marginalised by republicans, liberals, and nationalists of a bourgeois stripe—was swiftly followed by the counter-revolutionary reaction of the 1850s, in which socialists bore the brunt of heightened police repression, curtailment of rights, and strict censorship. Yet by the 1860s, the socialist movement had steadily increased in size and organisation, first at a regional, then at a national level. The rise of an urban industrial working class created new demands for better work and living conditions that the existing system of guilds and fraternal societies was ill-equipped to manage, leading to the proliferation of labour councils, forerunners of modern trade unions, first in Britain and then across the Continent. Increasingly durable socialist papers and societies sprang up to act as forums for progressive debate. With the gradual spread of electoral democracy across

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Europe, workers' parties formed in opposition not only to aristocratic and clerical conservatism, but also to perceived insufficiencies in the reformist efforts of liberals and radicals.[1]

By the 1860s, out of a disparate collection of largely isolated agitators and sect-like clubs, a broad coalition of groups had arisen encompassing varying currents of ideas and interests—from labour activists to democratic franchise reformers, from utopian experimenters to advocates of cooperative mutualism. Initially, all of them were united under a shared socialist banner, as the pragmatic need to cooperate to survive outweighed finer points of ideological difference. But this was never a stable or lasting situation, and disputes over socialism's assumptions and aims soon led to rifts within the coalition—perhaps most dramatically, the split between mutualists and statists that caused the demise of the first effort at socialist internationalism, the International Workingmen's Association (1864–1876). The rest of the century was marked by socialism's steady consolidation into a more clearly-defined construct. The initial diversity of socialist currents was reduced to something akin to an ideological oligopoly, dominated by Marxism, the current of thought developed by the German socialists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, alongside a number of smaller strands. The movement also refined its view of society and programme of demands, re-establishing its international presence in the form of the Second International (1889–1914), whose early congresses adopted resolutions on improving labour conditions, women's rights, agrarian policy, strike action, and opposition to militarism.

This process went hand-in-hand with its ascent to ever greater societal prominence on several fronts. Despite the best efforts of several decades of repression—including long-standing bans on trade union and partisan organisation—European governments were increasingly forced to concede the legitimacy of socialist activism. National trade union centres emerged in Britain in 1868, Germany in 1892, France in 1895, and Scandinavia in 1898–1899. Aided by incremental franchise extensions, socialist parties began to win parliamentary representation: for the first time in Germany in 1871, France in 1881, the Netherlands in 1888, Belgium in 1890, Italy in 1895, and Britain in 1900. By the start of the twentieth century, they were attracting nearly 5 million votes in total across Europe, and as much as 20–30% of the vote in countries such as Austria, Belgium, and above all Germany.

Socialism at the turn of the century, then, was by any standard an ideology on the rise. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which its ideological insurgency fundamentally and irrevocably reshaped the contours of

society. Simply put, the legacy of socialism was to inaugurate a new chapter in the treatment of 'the social'—in theoretical understandings of the constitution and driving forces of society, and in the practical manifestation of society's interests and needs. From a *disciplinary* viewpoint, it radically reoriented the perspective of political economy, and integrated it with insights from the philosophy of history to provide a new analysis of society and of production as the dynamo that underpins societal development. In its emphasis on the scientific method and reliance on empirical-inductive reasoning, experiential proof, and evidence from statistics, history, and ethnology, it instigated a significant leap forward in the *methodology* of social thought. It turned against both organicist and individualist-contractarian accounts of the *constitution of society*, instead offering a theory of society as composed of usually binary groups of economic classes whose diverging, even essentially opposing interests led them to engage in periodic conflicts of greater or lesser intensity against one another. Socialism also centred new interpretations of *concepts* such as 'social' and 'sociality', connecting them with specific definitions of solidarity, community, cooperation, and democracy, and introducing new derivations, such as 'socialisation', to describe the alternative economic system its adherents aspired to. It proposed radical uses for existing *structures*, above all those of the state and legal system, aiming to reorient the content of rights to include positive provision of social goods and improve the accessibility of representative parliamentary institutions, and agitated for the introduction of entirely new ones, including cooperative enterprises and state-administered public services. Lastly, it devised *strategies* to organise and mobilise the mass population on a scale never seen before, with a core of the industrial working class bolstered by appeals to allies in other population groups. In turn, the combination of these theoretical and practical advances also won socialism tangible results, with items on the socialist agenda steadily starting to become a reality: gradual extensions of the franchise, the introduction of early forms of social security and welfarist legislation, and improvements in pay and working conditions.

Unsurprisingly, these developments were not slow in eliciting a response from anti-socialist forces among societal elites. But in the final decades of the nineteenth century, this response shifted decidedly away from the flat rejection and truculent resistance that had characterised the mid-century reaction. It had become clear that mere repression and censorship—such as the German Anti-Socialist Laws (1878–1890)—had failed to extirpate the socialist movement. Instead, a variety of attempts began to emerge

that pushed back against socialism in a different way: by offering persuasive alternatives that sought to mimic, undermine, and displace socialism's theoretical and practical content on all fronts. The rise of the new discipline of sociology, which offered a variety of alternative, often less historicist and less economistic models of society and approaches to studying it, was spearheaded above all by academics with anti-socialist or at least anti-Marxist inclinations—including liberals such as Lujo Brentano and Max Weber, and conservatives such as Hans Delbrück, Werner Sombart, and Adolph Wagner. Methodologically, anti-socialists invested considerable energies in intense sponsorship of social Darwinism—especially as articulated by Herbert Spencer and his followers—as a rival way of bringing scientific insight into social thought, and above all as a competing account of social development. This was matched by attempts to reconceive society in terms of 'elites' and 'masses/crowds', denuding both terms of their economic class associations and even their conflictual relationship, or diverting the meaning of social conflict along national, racial, or religious lines. Anti-socialist ideologies sought to claim their own versions of the 'social' label, ranging from the Catholic social thought that underpinned the rise of Christian democracy, to the emergence of a 'social' faction within liberalism that contested the hegemony of the *laissez-faire* 'Manchester School', and even aristocratic-conservative attempts at enlightened patrician *noblesse oblige*. Governments concerned at the electoral rise of socialism brought in measures to give the hitherto 'night-watchman' *Polizei* state social functions, introducing rudimentary social insurance systems, in an attempt to stave off socialism's revolutionary edge. Simultaneously, non-socialist parties developed strategies to make deliberate inroads on socialism's heartland voters among the working class, ranging from 'One-Nation' Tory democracy to the emergence of the *Volkspartei*, and the politico-denominational *verzuilt* (pillarised) community system in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Together, these theoretical and practical responses constituted nothing less than a comprehensive existential threat to socialism's ideological *raison d'être*. In ideological terms, they represented a grand essential contestation of the contents of the 'social' or 'socialist' labels, and of which societal groups owned the right to use them to define their ideological assumptions and goals.[2] In other words, the questions of 'what is social' and 'what is socialism' had moved from being merely an internal dispute between different factions in the socialist movement—Blanquists, Fourierists, Lassalleans, Marxists, Owenites, Proudhonians, and other

nineteenth-century groupings—to a debate now being waged across all parts of society. This moved socialism from being on the offensive, from asserting its demands against external resistance, to being on the defensive, to protecting its demands against external encroachment. Specifically, the range of new ideological threats that socialism was facing from all sides explicitly and deliberately jeopardised its claim to be the best (indeed, the only) movement capable of grasping and speaking for society as a whole and for the mass of society's members. Pre-eminence as *the* expression of societal progress in movement form—a mantle it insisted it had wrested from out of the clutches of the bourgeois radicals of 1848–1849—was, and indeed remains, core to socialism's identity as an ideology. The attempts by other ideologies to appropriate and outdo its theoretical and practical achievements hence struck at the heart not only of socialism's authenticity, but its entire existence.

Arguably, socialism at the turn of the century was in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. Over decades of committed struggle, its thinkers and activists had sidelined, coaxed, or browbeaten their rivals—adjacent allies and implacable enemies alike—into acknowledging the importance of a 'social' perspective on society. One after the other, historians and philosophers, liberals and conservatives, aristocrats, clerics, and the commercial-industrial classes were updating their worldviews to include a 'social' component—sometimes autonomously developed as a counterpoint to the socialists' offering, sometimes brutally appropriated from it. It was a remarkable ideological feat. But now that socialists had achieved it, they had to be prepared to face the consequences. They had to find a way for socialism to stay at the leading edge of the theoretical and practical 'social' revolution it was unleashing—and not be overtaken by it.

Among the figures within the socialist movement who grasped these threats as well as the need to meet them most acutely, one of the most significant was Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), now generally remembered as the intellectual progenitor of Social Democracy. From the time of his first forays into socialism as a member of the 'Eisenacher' Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP) in 1872, Bernstein took an active part in every facet of socialist theoretical and practical activity. As a thinker, he began as a close confidant and ally of Engels in his interpretation of Marxian socialism, but caused hitherto unprecedented controversy within the movement in the late 1890s by espousing a new socialist position that appeared to abandon the Marxian commitment to revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society in favour of its gradual reform. His

arguments, articulated in a series of articles on the 'Problems of Socialism' (1896–1898) and the book *The Preconditions of Socialism* (1899), lit a fuse in German Social Democracy and the wider socialist movement, and were vehemently challenged at conferences of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in 1899, 1901, and 1903, as well as a congress of the Second International in 1900.[3] As a journalist and publisher, Bernstein served as editor of *Der Sozialdemokrat* (1881–1890), the SPD's main party organ during the Anti-Socialist Laws, and the more historically-oriented *Dokumente des Sozialismus* (1902–1905), and on the editorial team of the SPD's main theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit* (1891–1900). He also edited volumes of correspondence between Marx and Engels (1913) and selected documents from their *Nachlass* (1908, 1914), as well as a 12-volume edition of the collected works of their longstanding colleague and rival Ferdinand Lassalle (1919–1920). As an activist, Bernstein was a prodigious and talented stump-speaker on behalf of first the SDAP and later the SPD, before falling foul of the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1878. Exiled to Switzerland, he worked as personal secretary to a major SPD donor, Karl Höchberg; then, forced to leave under pressure from the German government, he settled in Britain in 1887, where he integrated himself rapidly into the disputes between the reform strategies advocated by the originally left-humanist Fabian Society of Beatrice and Sidney Webb and the more Marxist-oriented Social Democratic Federation of Henry Hyndman. Later, after being allowed to return from exile in 1901, Bernstein was elected to the Reichstag for the SPD, first in Breslau (1901–1907, 1912–1918) and later in Potsdam (1920–1928), and served briefly (1918–1919) as Assistant Secretary to the Reich Treasury in the early months of the Weimar Republic.[4]

These many engagements placed Bernstein at the heart of ideological contestations over socialism and 'the social'. This collection centres Bernstein's engagement with these key theoretical and practical challenges within and beyond the socialist movement, covering forty years of literary activity—beginning in 1891 at the height of his personal association with Engels and professional collaboration with Karl Kautsky as joint guardians of the Marxian legacy, and ending in 1931, shortly before his death. It brings together a selection of writings—books, lectures, articles, and other documents—that locate Bernstein squarely at the epicentre of this period of socialist *ideologisation*, and at the frontlines of the essential contestation taking place over the 'social' label. Beyond the specific debates over 'reform versus revolution' and 'revisionism versus orthodoxy' with which

Bernstein is traditionally most commonly associated, the texts in this collection find him confronting, again and again, the existential question of his movement: 'what is socialism?' It traces the multiple levels at which he asks and seeks to answer this question—from metatheory to intellectual history to outward-facing partisan defence—and in doing so uncovers a rich seam of intellectual activity that has receded somewhat into the background relative to better-known debates.

The writings presented here also illuminate how Bernstein saw his own work as a socialist ideologist, specifically in response to the range of ideological threats the movement faced. He saw himself—or to a greater or lesser extent readily accepted his labelling by others—as a social scientist (as much as he disliked the term), a social democrat, a Marxist, and a materialist.[5] Different contexts and cases brought these multiple ideological identities to the fore at different times and with different levels of emphasis. But just as, with the writings presented in previous volumes, it is inopportune and self-defeating to attempt to separate out from one another Bernstein's activities as (e.g.) a historian, philosopher, jurist, or political economist, it is similarly futile to try to create areas of clear blue (or indeed red) water between all of these multiple 'social-oriented' identities.[6] For Bernstein, they were each branches that led back to the same ideological root: that of socialism. In his view, being a socialist meant being all of them, at least to a highly significant extent. The purpose of the following discussion is to situate Bernstein's activity as a socialist ideologist within the wider contours of the debates taking place in the socialist movement at the time, outline the primary elements of his account of socialism, and offer some closing reflections on what can be learned from his analysis today.

Problems of Socialism, Continued: Socialism After the Revisionist Controversy

The revisionist controversy that gripped Marxist theory and social-democratic practice in 1896–1903 heralded a period of ever greater fragmentation within the socialist movement. It marked the height of socialism's own unique brand of *fin-de-siècle* pessimism, after capitalism had demonstrated a resilience that socialists did not think possible in its recovery from the 1873–1896 Long Depression, and thereby pushed hopes for the imminent achievement of socialism back into a suddenly uncertain future. With orthodox Marxists' failure to completely quash the

revisionist current, vital faultlines were embedded within the internal coalition (of parties, unions, intellectuals, etc.) that comprised the socialist movement—which became only deeper and more permanent over the course of the next several decades. Starting in the early years of the twentieth century, the "revisionism/orthodoxy" and "reform/revolution" debates were overtaken by—or, more accurately, folded into—a series of new questions that preoccupied socialists across Europe and the wider world. These manifested in a successive parade of acrimonious debates, and in some cases earth-shattering crises, that all turned on the promise and priorities of socialism.

In the wake of a series of elections (1902 in Belgium and France, 1904 in Italy, 1905 in the Netherlands, and 1907 in Germany), in which socialist and workers' parties stagnated or even lost both vote share and parliamentary seats to liberal and conservative parties riding a new tide of patriotic and militaristic fervour among the population, revisionist elements within the movement demanded changes to the long-standing socialist opposition to nationalism on the one hand, and imperialism and colonialism on the other. As tensions grew between the major European powers in the form of arms races, territorial disputes, and chauvinist policies, the socialist movement found itself confronted with the prospect of a European war that would jeopardise the burgeoning international solidarity it had fostered over previous decades. This prompted extended debates about using a coordinated mass strike to cripple the ability of national governments to wage war, but without a decisive resolution at either national or international levels of the movement. When war came in 1914, the decision of first the SPD and then other socialist parties to support war credits for their governments, and in many cases endorse war conduct that flagrantly defied the norms socialists had formerly claimed to espouse, led to the first comprehensive split in the movement. The Second International collapsed, and some parties suffered internal schisms, most prominently between the now-majority revisionist SPD and the largely orthodox Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) in 1917. With the end of the war in 1918, socialist parties swept to power across Europe for the first time, in many cases as a result of the 1917–1923 wave of revolutions. This fuelled new debates about the form of government socialists should support, with revisionists largely aligning behind a continuation of parliamentary democracy, and orthodox elements advocating moving towards a council republic.

In short, over the three decades that followed the revisionism debate, the socialist movement in effect came to the view that there were rather

more 'problems of socialism' than the ones Bernstein had first identified in his eponymous articles of 1896–1898. Bernstein himself started this period as a borderline pariah in the socialist movement. He narrowly escaped attempts by enraged orthodox Marxists to have him summarily expelled from the SPD, and in the first years after the revisionist controversy found only a few prominent sympathisers for his position—including Eduard David and Wolfgang Heine, both of whom later rose to prominent positions in the Weimar Republic. Bernstein and his work were subjected to endless volleys of polemical attacks by fellow socialists, most notably the famous *Social Reform and Revolution* (1900) by Rosa Luxemburg, which established her as a leading spokesperson of Marxist orthodoxy, and—more painfully—*Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme* (1899) by his erstwhile friend and colleague Kautsky.[7] After a series of increasingly embittered exchanges, Bernstein abruptly terminated his association with *Neue Zeit* in 1900, and switched to writing for the newer and more iconoclastic social-democratic periodical *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, edited by Joseph Bloch, who rapidly converted the journal into a permanent (and increasingly popular) bastion of revisionist thought.[8]

From this new position, as the revisionist controversy was superseded by the 'national/colonial question' and the 'mass strike question', Bernstein became gradually ever more involved in all of these debates, producing a plethora of articles for the *Monatshefte*, and three books: *The Political Mass Strike and the Political Situation of Social Democracy in Germany* (1905), *The Strike: Its Nature and its Effects* (1906), and *The English Danger and the German People* (1911).[9] He also dedicated himself to less ideologically controversial historical work on the rise of the German workers' movement (1907–1910) and democratic socialist currents during the English Civil War (1908), but produced little additional content explicitly in defence of his revisionist position.[10] WW1 and the 1918–1919 German Revolution, which brought to an end the Wilhelmine *Kaiserreich* and inaugurated the Weimar Republic, had a major impact on Bernstein's stance in the socialist movement. He was one of very few prominent revisionists to turn against the war, and ended up a member of the USPD, allied with Kautsky, Luxemburg, and many of his most vehement former critics against David, Heine, and several of his strongest prior supporters. As a commentator during WW1, he consistently advocated a negotiated end to hostilities and a resurrection of international socialist solidarity.[11] At its conclusion, he became an impassioned voice in favour of SPD–USPD reunification and an end to socialist fragmentation, and in the final decade

of his life he took on the role of a kind of grandee of Social Democracy, and a dedicated propagandist on behalf of the Republic and socialism's role in its government.[12]

Cutting across the many twists and turns in the contextual backdrop to his work, what unites all of these interventions is that, in them, Bernstein was deploying a socialist ideological perspective to analyse specific external theoretical and practical questions in a way that aligned him more or less with the major socialist interlocutors of his time. But alongside this, Bernstein was also simultaneously engaging in a debate on the object of this socialist ideological perspective itself. In *Preconditions* and the 'Problems of Socialism' articles, some of which he republished as part of the gargantuan *On the History and Theory of Socialism* (1901), which effectively acted a theoretical supporting apparatus and companion volume to *Preconditions*, Bernstein probed what he saw as key problems in Marxist theory that had been revealed by a combination of new developments in societal conditions, social theory, and social-democratic practice. From this point onwards, he launched into a new phase of his analysis, and challenged socialist ideology on two new dimensions, one excavating deeper into its Marxist theoretical foundations, the other pushing further into its applications in social-democratic practice.

Bernstein did so essentially in two waves, with vastly different receptions. When he first addressed these themes in 1901–1906 (with some preludes in 1891–1897 and postludes in 1908–1912) much of his analysis was swept up into the whirlwind of outrage about revisionism more generally. His every intervention was met with howls of fury from the orthodox side, and Bernstein was reluctantly forced to clarify and defend his position in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, as well as occasional terse notes to *Neue Zeit*.[13] By the time he revisited these themes in 1918–1922 especially, Bernstein was writing at the height of his ideological achievement. Denuded of many of its orthodox elements, which remained in the USPD or even defected further left to the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), the SPD reoriented towards a more revisionist track, and called Bernstein to lead the drafting of its 1921 Görlitz party programme. It was his understanding of socialism that became, at least for a time, the ideological basis for German Social Democracy, and (re)statements of his views—now regarded as seminal interventions—were in demand in Germany and beyond. Unsurprisingly, it was above all in the second wave that Bernstein had the intellectual latitude to offer not just a diagnosis and critique of the societal position of socialist ideology, but also—in line with his own clear

preference for maintaining a healthy balance between these elements in his work—a more positive statement to show socialists an ideological way forward. Although he was, in effect, extending yet further the list of 'problems of socialism', he was doing so very clearly from the perspective of reinforcing and improving socialists' ability to hold their own in theoretical and practical ideological contests.

What are the two dimensions to Bernstein's new challenge to socialism? At the core of Bernstein's engagement with socialism lies an enduring concern with the proper relationship between scientific social research and socialist strategy. In Marxist discourse at the time, this relationship was fused into an integral connection in the idea of 'scientific socialism'—in vulgarised form, that scientific enquiry, if rigorously undertaken, leads to socialist conclusions, with particular focus on the two Marxian insights of the materialist conception of history and the creation of surplus value under capitalism.[14] Bernstein queried both directions of this relationship—that science '*is*' socialist, and that socialism '*is*' a science—and set himself the task of delineating the boundaries between the two, or to put it differently, between social(ist) *theory* and social(ist) *practice*. Going well beyond his remarks on the topic in *Preconditions*, which mostly serve to frame his discussions of historical materialism and class conflict, as well as giving an offhand example of the "cant" he felt was pervading much socialist ideology, Bernstein argues that there is an essential difference between the purposes of the scientific and policy-oriented sides of socialist ideology:

> Social and political doctrines are distinguished *inter alia* from the relevant sciences by the fact that they are closed off precisely where these remain open. They lie under the dictate of certain purposes, in which it is not a matter of insight but rather about *volition*, and which lend them, even if in certain points they leave space open for new insights, a *finished* and *permanent* character. But scientific sociology is never closed off, because its object, society, is a living organism and because, regarding the laws that apply for this organism, it knows no final truths in the last instance.[15]

By taking a partisan stance on the state of societal conditions, socialist practice is incapable of exercising the "*scientific unbiasedness*" that is the essential criterion of accurate analysis. Certainly, Bernstein is keen that socialism "builds on the foundation of scientific insight and acknowledges this as the element that gives it direction", but the label "scientific socialist" can only at best apply where socialism uses this scientific insight to remain critically self-aware of the foundations of its doctrine:

> The name scientific socialism retains its full justification for me when the concept "scientific" in it is defined precisely in its critical sense, as a *postulate* and *programme*—as a demand that socialism makes of itself, and which conveys the idea that for what it wants the scientific method and insight have directive force.[16]

Citing Antonio Labriola—and anticipating the much later arguments of the Frankfurt School—Bernstein argues that the understanding of scientific socialism he endorses is best described as "critical socialism", with critique understood in a Kantian sense as "scientific criticism [*wissenschaftlicher Kritizismus*]".[17] It is not that Bernstein opposes the idea that socialism has to be scientific; rather, in order to "discover […] *what is actually the case* in its social contexts" and avoid straying into idle speculation, socialism has to be very clear about the limits on how far science can justify the contents of its social programme.[18] He analogises the relationship with the jealous boundary policing between the disciplines of sociology and social policy, arguing that the hard divide between the conditional diagnoses/prognoses of the former and the more general prescriptions of the latter is "fundamentally justified and advisable"—even if socialists ultimately ended up doing a bit of both.[19]

At the same time, in order for socialism to retain its solid grounding in scientific social analysis, Bernstein saw it as absolutely vital to replicate a sociology/social-policy division of functions within the movement itself. He was deeply concerned at the tendency of the party-activist side of the movement to intervene in theoretical debates, in a way that he felt was proving increasingly detrimental to the ability of party theorists to engage in sincere rigorous enquiry. When Bernstein is talking about the relationship between theorists and activists, it is not hard—given his own experience at the SPD conferences during the revisionist controversy—to think of his arguments as at least on some level self-referential. After all, as he wrote on his SPD membership card in 1902, he identified first and foremost as a *Schriftsteller*, even if his socialist activities were far from limited to literary work. But it was more the SPD's summary expulsion of the social-imperialist Gerhard Hildebrand from the party in 1912 for "gross violation of the basic principles of the party programme", after he questioned whether socialisation of the economy should be the goal of Social Democracy, that riled Bernstein into adopting a stance strongly in favour of greater siloisation.[20] He insists that science cannot be subject to external interference, either intrinsically and instrumentally: "Science is not free if

it is subject to any considerations whatsoever that do not arise from its own laws".[21] The essentialising arguments at the heart of 'scientific socialism' risked the ability of critical, scientifically-rigorous social theory to give social-democratic practice the proper guidance in pursuit of its aims. They also risked losing Social Democracy valuable support among the educated and academic *strata* of society, on the (in Bernstein's view entirely false) assumption that the proletariat's ascent to power would mean an end to "freedom of science", and "intellectual dependency" on the whims of the newly-empowered mass population.[22]

He attributes these rising tensions to the growth and increasing success of the socialist movement as it settled into the 'long game' of class struggle, and the novelty of intellectual radicalism lost its appeal to all but an interested minority of its members:

> In the beginnings of the movement, a ravenous hunger for theoretical readings prevailed among the workers who had been gripped by socialism. […] Today, it has receded a lot, and traces of a certain cloying satiation show themselves vis-à-vis everything that looks like theory.[23]

But socialism cannot afford to do without the theoretical side of its ideological project. There is a clear difference, for Bernstein, between coming to positions that radically deviate from established socialist principles as a result of theoretical critique, versus mere practical opportunism. The latter is obviously dangerous for ideological integrity, but the former must be treated far more charitably. Paradoxically, in order to keep the contact and unity between theory and practice constant and stable, socialists had to allow a division of labour to emerge between the two activities:

> Nobody is challenging the party's right to set down certain norms for membership of it, and to insist on observing certain rules of party-comradely discipline. Render unto the party the things which are the party's. But precisely for that reason it matters that it adheres firmly to this proposition: *Render unto science the things which are science's.*[24]

Bernstein's point articulates the sentiment that *ne supra crepidam sutor judicaret* ("the shoemaker must not judge beyond the shoe")—a statement he himself cites explicitly as early as 1894.[25] Theorists and activists have to have the requisite respect for the different functions each of them performed on behalf of the socialist movement; only in that way might

socialists stand a chance of accurately and efficaciously achieving their social goals.

Bernstein's second major concern is related to the first, but is more practice-oriented, and concerns socialism's ability to achieve societal transformation wholly autonomously as a social movement. Where his first concern addressed internal relations within the socialist movement, this one turns to its external relations with other societal groups; specifically, rival parties and their governing ideologies. Bernstein is motivated here by helping socialists devise the most effective way to achieve progress, defined as the attainment of cooperative societal well-being:

> Progress means further development in the direction of a given goal, and the objectively given goal of societal development is and must be to bring about the highest possible general state of wellbeing through the highest possible unfolding and the most harmonious possible cooperation [*Zusammenwirken*] of all the economic and intellectual forces of society.[26]

Prima facie, of course, for socialism progress is about improving the position of the worst-off in society, and however socialists seek to confront the theoretical and practical problems that Bernstein identifies, their solution must be one that continues to place the needs and expectations of the working class at the centre of their programme. But, in Bernstein's view, improvement for the working class coincides with class-transcending improvements for society at large:

> The class of wage-labourers can foster their progress today in no way at all other than by working towards the material and intellectual preconditions of general societal progress.[27]

In this light, it is unsurprising that, even though the working class is at the centre of its programme, socialism is no longer the only ideology—and Social Democracy no longer the only party—whose general visions for society now speak to the working class, and the popular mass more broadly.

Conversely, the working class is also not the only *stratum* that socialism and Social Democracy can speak to either. Other classes—from the petty bourgeoisie to the industrial-commercial bourgeoisie to the large landowners—acknowledge the alignment between working-class and societal improvement. This forces their representative ideologies and parties into periodic progressive turns:

> [They] cannot flourish without the continuation of economic forward development, and so at least a great part of their members must in the deciding moments again and again come down on the side of parties that fight for social progress in one way or another.[28]

In fact, Bernstein muses, in many countries bourgeois-radical parties were making such shifts towards the progressive left on a more permanent basis, and still largely holding their own electorally.[29] This creates the conceptual space and tactical scope for socialists to form coalitions with other classes and parties to make headway on their progressive aims. Indeed, this may also be a necessary part of socialists' future strategy, not least because there is no successful historical precedent for a *pure* class revolution by the previously oppressed; rather, most social revolutions start with periods of power-sharing between classes.[30] The answer, for Bernstein, may have to involve forming a progressive coalition, or "left bloc":

> The conquest of political power, the development of political-democratic institutions is frequently only to be attained and secured through coalitions of the social-democratic workers' parties with the bourgeois-democratic parties.[31]

For Bernstein, this is not a source of despair for socialists, but one of opportunity. It is already a partial political revolution if the working class secures a share in political power, allowing it to pursue the first points on its social reform agenda. Socialists should not limit themselves to thinking only in binaries of *pure* bourgeois or *pure* proletarian rule, but seize the chance of part-proletarianising existing institutions whenever they have the chance.

So whom should socialists turn to when forming such a progressive coalition? In Bernstein's view, the two likeliest partners for this are social liberalism and Christian Democracy, in the form of Free-Minded [*freisinnig*] parties and *Zentrum*—parties who had tried the hardest to cast themselves as having *Volkspartei* status. On liberalism, Bernstein raises to the ideological level the Marxian claim about the "civilising effects" of capitalism, acknowledging that it was the source of many beneficial insights that helped lay the foundation for progress as socialists conceive of it:

> The one-sidednesses and excesses of economic liberalism cannot make one forget the great piece of truth that it contains. It was for its time a necessary, fruitful insight.…

> And what is to be said about economic liberalism also applies to political liberalism, or […] to liberalism as a *worldview*. Yes, to a certain degree it is still true of it—of the idea of the right of all those who become capable of life against everything that is upheld by tradition.[32]

But in its societally progressive role, liberalism has now been superseded by socialism. True democratic liberals have to understand the historical role of the working class, and be amenable to cooperation with socialism:

> [T]he test for the authenticity of liberal, that is, freedom-oriented [*freiheitlich*] sentiment today lies nowhere other than in its stance towards socialism, towards the workers' movement, towards the working class's struggle for emancipation. Anyone whose liberalism does not retain its colours here is not someone who much is to be thought of at all.…
>
> The politician who holds democratic institutions close to heart, so who is liberal in the great world-historical sense of the word, is required precisely by the logic of facts to become inwardly acquainted with socialism, to grasp its historical mission, to strive for an understanding with it.[33]

This, traditionally, is where the liberals of the Free-Minded tendency fall down. The period in which Bernstein is writing coincided with a nearly two-decade period of instability in the German bourgeois left, with Free-Mindedness [*Freisinn*] divided into multiple factions. Some, like Theodor Barth and the Free-Minded Union [*Freisinnige Vereinigung*], were amenable to cooperation with Social Democracy, indeed advocated strongly in favour of it, and hence constituted plausible allies [*bündnisfähig*] for the socialist movement.[34] But others, like the Free-Minded People's Party [*Freisinnige Volkspartei*] led by Eugen Richter, entertained what Bernstein saw as grand delusions of acting as major kingmakers in the centre-ground that were entirely at odds with their electoral position, demanding that socialist voters align behind them while simultaneously maintaining a rigid anti-socialist policy position:

> [I]n their eyes, Social Democracy does not even have any right to claim its own representation […] at all, or that compared to the Conservatives, etc., it even represents the greater evil.[35]

In other words, social liberals might be socialists' close neighbours in principle, but a fairly unreliable partner with whom to build lasting progressive plans. *Zentrum*, meanwhile, was also prone to its own reactionary

backsliding, but had exhibited enough "democratic oppositional spirit" to side with the Free-Minders on most political issues, and enough capacity for communitarian mass mobilisation to count at the pro-worker end of the bourgeois spectrum.[36]

It is interesting that, in advocating collaboration with social liberals and Christian democrats, Bernstein is prefiguring the post-WW1 'Weimar coalition' of the SPD, *Zentrum*, and the German Democratic Party (DDP), successor to the Free-Minded tradition. But Bernstein does not consider either of them ideal partners; it is more that, of the available options, liberal welfarism and Catholic social policy are the only ideologies who are even half-sincere in their claims to be 'social'. Certainly, neither of them are a replacement for a strong Social Democracy, and socialists' priority must continue to be securing the election of a sizeable number of their own to representative political bodies, in order to give an authentic voice to workers' needs and expectations at the highest levels:

> The more deputies Social Democracy gets into the parliament by its own strength, the more independent its representation […] will in turn thereby become from the liberal-democratic bourgeois left.[37]

In turn, the presence of 'pure' socialist/working-class deputies strengthens the hand of Social Democracy when refining the precise dynamics of its cooperation with bourgeois progressives—especially in terms of who leads the coalition. Bernstein reminds socialists never to forget that "the future belongs and is owed to socialism", and on that basis insist that Social Democracy has to be the dominant partner in any progressive alliance.[38] At the very least, such an alliance must be formed on the basis of reciprocity. Social Democracy pays bourgeois radicals the respect of taking their essential core demands seriously, such as on fiscal and religious policy; the least that these radicals could do is treat Social Democracy's demands the same in return, rather than as skittish wills-o'-the-wisp on the part of the working class:

> In those circles, they are only too inclined to view and treat the demands that Social Democracy has to pose in a coalition if it is not to give itself up entirely, as a matter of mere mood or some agitatory desire *du jour*. … Social Democracy has provided ample evidence that it does not expect any sacrifices from the bourgeois centrist parties that they cannot make without

> taking damage to their soul; hence, it *must* and *may demand the same treatment from them in return*.[39]

Ultimately, there are no hard-and-fast rules, no "formula that fits all contexts", that can govern whether or not socialists should pursue coalition opportunities.[40] The decision over whether or not to cooperate with bourgeois progressives, radicals, democrats, and republicans has to be on a case-by-case basis:

> [It is] dependent not on any consideration of formal aspects, but simply on the prospective *effect* on the *general political situation* and *development*.[41]

But socialists have to at least embrace the *possibility of possibilism*:

> Social Democracy means welcoming every honest alliance [*Bundesgenossenschaft*] that is willing to help wage the struggle against [reactionary] powers.[42]

Only by seizing every opportunity that opens the door to empowerment in this way can socialists ensure that they continue to play a major role in driving forward the progress they are committed to realising in society.

The Workers' Perspective on Society: Bernstein's Account of Socialist Ideology

These twin problems—one of social theory, one of social-democratic practice—form the backdrop to Bernstein's discussion of socialism. In the works collected in this volume, Bernstein undertakes the task of explicitly articulating his own understanding of socialist ideology, beyond the more passing comments he devotes to it in *Preconditions of Socialism* and other earlier writings.[43] The first and longest text, *Der Sozialismus Einst und Jetzt: Streitfragen des Sozialismus in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, here translated as *Socialism Past and Present: Historical and Contemporary Disputes within Socialism*, was originally conceived as a series of lectures Bernstein was invited to give in the summer semester of 1921 at the University of Berlin—with the exception of his final chapter, which he added later when preparing the text for publication in 1922.[44] Over the course of the book, Bernstein traces the intellectual, economic, and political history of the socialist movement. He outlines the contributions of a

succession of thinkers—among others, Robert Owen, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Karl Rodbertus, Lassalle, and of course Marx and Engels—who, in his view, informed and profoundly shaped the development of socialists' social outlook and demands. In doing so, Bernstein moves between themes that were and are of central salience in socialist thought, including the nature of class and class struggle, theories of the state, and the importance of parliamentary democracy.

It is not entirely clear whether Bernstein intended *Socialism Past and Present* as a sequel or companion volume to *Preconditions*—although he issued a revised and expanded edition of the latter in 1921, around the same time as he was giving the original lectures. All the same, there are moments of fascinating mirroring between the two texts, both thematically and structurally. Both feature extensive analyses of the class structure of society in (respectively) the 1890s and 1900s, viewed in both occupational and income-level terms; both discuss the centrality or otherwise of the Marxian labour theory of value to socialist ideology; and both devote extensive sections to the relationship between socialism and parliamentary democracy.[45] Some parts are functionally equivalent, but for the requirements of changed historical contexts: the somewhat abstract discussion of Blanquism in *Preconditions* is replaced by the live debate over the Leninist—or, to stay with Bernstein's term, Bolshevist—"perversion of socialism" in *Socialism Past and Present*.[46] Yet there are also significant differences. Gone is the discussion of historical materialism and Hegelian dialectics, to be replaced by intellectual-historical analyses of utopianism, natural rights, and a far deeper analysis of statism.[47] When combined with the far broader 'castlist' of figures it considers, this gives the palpable impression that, whereas *Preconditions* is extensively a book about Marxism *simpliciter*, *Socialism Past and Present* has broadened its view to socialism *tout entier*—i.e., socialism beyond just Marxism.

The second part of this volume consists of five shorter texts, all written before *Socialism Past and Present*, which contextualise and build up to Bernstein's late engagement with socialist ideology. The first of them, *Die soziale Doktrin des Anarchismus*, translated as *The Social Doctrine of Anarchism*, was in fact a series of seven articles that appeared in *Neue Zeit*—the first two (equivalent to §§I and II) in December 1891, and the remainder in July–September 1892.[48] The earliest work in this collection, it is a voluminous engagement with key figures in the intellectual canon of anarchism, masquerading as ostensibly an extended review of the egoist anarchist John Henry Mackay's book *The Anarchists: A Picture of*

Civilisation at the Close of the Nineteenth Century.[49] Bernstein uses the opportunity to conduct a detailed exegesis of the ideas of Max Stirner, Proudhon, and Mikhail Bakunin, as well as some passing comments on Peter Kropotkin. Highly unusually from the perspective of contemporary anarchism studies, Bernstein sees Stirner's eclectic individualist anarchism as by far the truest and most consistent exposition of the ideology, and he probes with forensic diligence what he sees as the unquestioned "bourgeois" content of both his and Proudhon's social theories.[50] Anarchists of a Bakuninist stripe, meanwhile, propagate unstable "anarcho-communist hybrids", which neither shed their bourgeois elements nor offer the working class the most effective tools for their emancipation.[51]

The second text, *Zur Frage: Sozialliberalismus oder Kollektivismus?*, translated as *Social Liberalism or Collectivism*, was originally an article in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, reissued in a special printing in the middle of 1900.[52] In it, Bernstein is responding to attempts by the sociologist Franz Oppenheimer to claim him as a "kindred spirit" in his efforts to give bourgeois radicalism a more progressive reformist edge—specifically, to build a bridge with socialism by adding thicker layers of content to the new concept of "social liberalism". Oppenheimer argues that socialist agitation in the form of electoral and trade-union struggle is a necessary but not sufficient means to bring about the end of capitalism, and suggests a model of "settlement cooperatives" as a vital complementary tool to do so.[53] Bernstein objects strongly to Oppenheimer's efforts to recruit him into the social-liberal fold, and rejects Oppenheimer's attempt to retain a decisive role for free competition in the economy as standing in fundamental tension with the 'social' label he is trying to claim.[54] He closes by arguing that

> the term *social-liberal*, like the term *social-democratic*, is a tautology; there is no liberalism and no democratism [*Demokratismus*] that would not be social in nature. Social-liberal only makes sense as a contraction of socialist-and-liberal, as a shorter version of *liberal-socialist*.[55]

As a consequence, for Bernstein, social liberalism ends up with two choices: either it accepts the need for societal control of the economy, in which case it collapses into Social Democracy; or it rejects it, in which case it becomes an unsustainable contradiction in terms.

The other three texts in this part were all originally delivered by Bernstein as lectures, and were subsequently published as standalone books more

or less rapidly afterwards. *Wie ist wissenschaftlicher Sozialismus möglich?*, translated as *How is Scientific Socialism Possible?*, was held in front of the Berlin Social-Scientific Students' Association [*Sozialwissenschaftlicher Studentenverein*] in May 1901, and then immediately seized upon for special publication by the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.[56] This is Bernstein's most extended engagement with the relationship between scientific social enquiry and social-democratic policy, which starts with an evaluation of the scientific insights that Marxism has brought to the socialist movement. He traces the deep association between science and socialism, even within the older utopian tendencies in the movement, and insists that socialists must retain a healthy respect for the perpetual inexhaustibility of the questions their social-scientific allies set out to answer. *Was ist Sozialismus?*, translated as *What is Socialism?*, was delivered at the end of December 1918 to a packed audience in the Berlin *Philharmonie*, only seven weeks after the declaration of the new German Republic.[57] Released as a book in early 1922 after what Bernstein describes as repeated enquiries to make the text publicly available, this work offers his intellectual and sociological account of how socialism came to become the ideology of the workers' movement. He concludes with an evaluation of the post-WW1 context in which socialists find themselves, and counsels patient, creative work in building the conditions to bring socialist society closer to realisation. Finally in this part, *Die Sozialisierung der Betriebe: Leitgedanken für eine Theorie des Sozialisierens*, translated as *The Socialisation of Enterprises: Guiding Principles for a Theory of Socialisation*, was held at a meeting of the political science seminar at the University of Basel in February 1919, and published later that year with a preface by Robert Michels, who had originally invited Bernstein to speak.[58] Here, Bernstein confronts the question of how to establish social control over economic production, and starts with an overview of how the awareness of the historical conditionality of this task became established in the socialist movement. He then turns to examine which parts of the economy are better- and worse-placed for immediate direct economic takeover, and closes with a brief discussion of alternative approaches that could be used to achieve similar ends.

The third part of the volume presents a range of articles that Bernstein published in the two main theoretical organs of German Social Democracy, *Neue Zeit* and *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, as well as several other documents from the last years of his literary output. In these pieces, Bernstein provides additional theoretical explication or case-specific application of the

ideas he develops in his major texts on ideology and socialist theory—above all on 'scientific socialist' methodology, the role of the working class, and democratic strategy. The articles fall into three more-or-less discrete phases, which correspond to the three main periods of Bernstein's activity as a socialist ideologist. Those in the first phase, starting with 'A Piece of Materialist Propaganda-Writing' and continuing up until 'Two Political Programmatic Symphonies', cover a period from 1893 to 1897, and show Bernstein playing point-defence on various issues in socialism, again using the forum of book reviews to launch into theoretical and methodological discussions.[59] Most of these articles were written before the first series of his 'Problems of Socialism' articles appeared in *Neue Zeit*, which ran from October 1896 to April 1897; the last one was published in the interlude before the start of the second series of 'Problems of Socialism' articles in September 1897. The second phase of articles, which picks up with 'Idealism, the Theory of Struggle, and Science' and closes with 'Science, Value-Judgments, and the Party', are from between 1901 and 1912, and show Bernstein steadily moving from responding to criticisms of his view of the socialism–science relationship onto preoccupations with class struggle and electoral strategy.[60] All of them appeared in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, after Bernstein's acrimonious severing of ties with the editorial staff of *Neue Zeit*. The final phase of documents are from Bernstein's post-WW1 output, which coincided with a gradual let-up in his journalistic activity.[61] At the start of the 1920s, Bernstein's energies were consumed with activity on behalf of the SPD—as Reichstag deputy for Potsdam (Teltow-Beeskow) and architect of the party's 1921 Görlitz Programme—as well as producing a prolific output of larger literary projects, including both *Socialism Past and Present* and *What is Socialism?* (both 1922) and the expanded edition of *Preconditions of Socialism* (1921), but also his histories of the 1848–1849 French and 1918–1919 German revolutions (both 1921), and a collection of economic writings (1920).[62] The effect of this in practice was that most of the pieces from this phase remained unpublished, and hence belong to his literary *Nachlass*, which lies in the holdings of the International Institute for Social History. Nevertheless, the content of these later pieces indicates that Bernstein's focus on some of the themes in his earlier phases continued to preoccupy him well into his twilight years.

The first point that emerges clearly from these writings is that Bernstein finds socialism to be an ideology that somewhat resists easy definition. In part, this is because there is a remarkably divergent range of views even

among self-declared socialists regarding the meaning of the ideology they subscribe to—views that may overlap to an extent but often exhibit limited consistency. Bernstein gives a flavour of this diversity of meanings at the start of *What is Socialism?*:

> Some understand under socialism an imaginary state of affairs, while others think of a movement, a development, yet others of a policy, or rather a political system, and others further think of a theory or an insight.[63]

In *Socialism Past and Present*, meanwhile, he distils this list into three competing definitions:

> The word socialism […] is frequently used as the expression for an imagined state of affairs that is underpinned by a certain property order and economic order, and which is to be embodied in an entire ideal state. Others set it as equivalent in meaning to the movement or struggle by societal classes to realise such an economic order, and for others still it is the collective term for a number of demands for institutions that are underpinned by certain ideas of right and ethical concepts.[64]

In Bernstein's view, none of these three definitions fully captures socialism by itself; with each of them, "[a] partial piece is identified more or less correctly, but the matter itself is not exhausted".[65] But what they clearly show is the urgent need for clarificatory work on what socialism is, including to what extent it can be a semi-blurred map of quasi-contestable concepts in shifting relations to one another, versus a systematically-delineated well-defined schema.

Bernstein's own view is shaped by his profound dislike of utopian tendencies in socialist literature. Post-Marx and Engels, he does not believe it is possible any longer to sustain a view of socialism as a form of alternative present; instead, it must be conceived as a future that lies somewhere along a historical trajectory. The implication of this is that speculation on what socialism looks like is no longer about how to make the present *better* but how to make the future *at all*—i.e., it is by definition more remote *and* more open to change, and the more it is both of these the more speculative it becomes, and the less it lends itself to "a fixed view of the future".[66] Accounts of societal order or lists of social demands cannot be static from the time-sliced perspective of the present; they must evolve dynamically to reflect the changing perspective over time on the way into

the future. Consequently, of the competing definitions Bernstein names, he places by far the strongest emphasis on the idea of conceiving of it as a movement. For this, he claims theoretical backing from Marx and Engels:

> An explanation […] which presents socialism as a system, one will not in fact find in any of the writings of Friedrich Engels or Karl Marx. … [T]hey opposed any attempt to construct a *system* of socialism, they opposed any ready-made plan for socialism, so to speak. For them, socialism is a process of societal development that takes place under certain historical conditions. No plan, no schema, but rather a *movement*, which has as its material foundation today's capitalist mode of production—that is socialism according to them.[67]

The object socialists should be searching for when asking "what is socialism *as a movement*?" is thus not "any specific indication of the *content* of socialism", but rather "what *perspective* socialism stems from and what it *appears* as".

But if socialism is a movement, whose movement is it, and what perspective does it represent? In Bernstein's view, the socialist movement is *prima facie* a movement of and for the *working class*, and it is the workers' perspective on society that it embodies. He offers a simple statement of this in *What is Socialism?*:

> Socialism is the sum of the social demands and natural ambitions of workers in modern capitalist society who have come to a recognition of their class situation and the tasks of their class.[68]

Again, he expands on this definition in *Socialism Past and Present*:

> Modern socialism is—The distilled encapsulation of the intellectual content of the political, economic, and general cultural endeavours of the workers who have attained an awareness of their class situation as well as those of their coequivalent [*gleichgestellt*] societal *strata* in the countries of capitalist development, and the struggle to realise these endeavours.[69]

Both definitions clearly state the preconditions of the movement: a society that has reached the capitalist stage of economic development, and a *stratum* of workers who have become self-conscious as a class. This, for Bernstein, is the fundamental core of socialist ideology. But elsewhere Bernstein offers a few extra details about the aims of the socialist

movement. While socialism always needs to be consciously open to self-revision, two concrete elements—at least in Bernstein's view—are fairly constant:

> In all domains, the class movement of the workers pushes to reshape society along the lines of abolishing all class distinctions, and of the planned regulation of the whole economic life through society itself.[70]

But even the abolition of classes and societalisation of the economy are, for Bernstein, not indispensable socialist ends as much as contingent means designed to realise a higher principle: that of a far-reaching "completed state" of "ethical commonality [*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*]", and a society founded on devotion to the common good and solidarity within the "general community [*Allgemeinheit*]".[71] Where these societal characteristics are absent, "the substantive attributes of socialism are missing", and the task that workers' "demands" and "endeavours" are geared towards is ultimately to achieve "the connectedness of human beings as a society".

These aims are not extensive, but they point in a clear direction: for Bernstein, socialism is a movement of and for the workers, *but it is not a sectarian workers' interest group*. Not only does it also act on behalf of workers' "coequivalent societal *strata*", but also, in order to be *social* as well as *socialist*, the demands it makes are intended to benefit society as a whole. Yet the perspective from which socialism makes recommendations for society's benefit always remains that of the working class:

> [T]he movement itself draws its strength and its goals from the real foundations of societal life, from the real needs of the class that forms its centre. On its basis it puts together its demands. And the summary of these demands—one can read whichever programme of a socialist party one will—*the intellectual summary*, *the ideational content of these demands*, *that*, I repeat, *is socialism*.[72]

In other words, socialism must always carry at its core the economic demands of the working class under any given societal conditions. It is the workers' perspective that is constant; it is the theoretical and practical content this perspective implies that is open to evolving over time.

Yet Bernstein is well aware that, even if socialism as an ideology cannot be stipulated too precisely in order to leave room for its conscious (self-) revision, it also cannot be too vaguely delineated, or it is in danger of

losing its meaning, and its distinctness from other ideologies trying to encroach on its turf. Hence, he also offers several clear indications about what this theoretical and practical content looks like—or what the workers' perspective should be concerned with—in the societal conditions in which he is operating.

For Bernstein, defining socialism as an ideology necessarily requires a comprehensive, detailed engagement with the precise status of the Marxian legacy within it. His aim in doing so stems from two main motivations. First, after a lifetime of work by Marx and Engels, and an exponentially-growing ecosystem of extensions and applications of their contributions, a high degree of conceptual confusion has pervaded the Marxian theoretical edifice. Part of what Bernstein sets out to provide is thus essentially a form of analytical Marxology: a project of conceptual clarification and rigorous straightening-out of Marxian arguments that occasionally prefigures the aspirations of the much later 'September Group' of 'analytical Marxism'.[73] But the second, more powerful drive for Bernstein is a desire to steer socialists' focus away from Marx and Engels' early writings, and far more towards their later output—above all Marx's *Civil War in France*, and Engels' *Anti-Dühring* and its précis in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, which he repeatedly recommends to readers as the best statement of Marxian ideas.[74] At heart, Bernstein reads Marxism as a theory that both (1) celebrates and also (2) warns of the contingent limits to the creative power of the human will—a theory of both the potential of, and the parameters to, collective human agency in transforming the world around it.[75] Citing a turn of phrase in a letter from Rodbertus to Rudolph Meyer, Bernstein expresses this in terms of the "freedom of variation" within boundaries imposed by societal conditions:

> [T]here is a reciprocal dependency between the foundations and forms of societal life, which the will of human beings cannot respectively remove, but […] this dependency always still leaves the will room for variation.[76]

Both variables had changed drastically over the course of Marx and Engels' lives. Collective agency had become more powerful via the growth of the working-class/socialist movement; and the parameters around it had shifted due to developments in production, the class structure of society, the expansion of the franchise, and all the other social developments it had successfully brought about.[77] For Bernstein, Marx and Engels had not necessarily predicted these specific developments, but

> thoroughly foresaw the possibility that the further development of society could make necessary changes in individual aspects of their programme, and precisely for that reason consistently declined to bring their demands into a *unified system free of contradictions*.[78]

As someone intimately acquainted with their less-well-known later thinking, Bernstein is convinced that they would not only have grudgingly accepted, but enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to revisit and reframe their arguments—and cites passages from their later works that, in his view, underscore areas where Marx and Engels started to theoretically self-improve and self-overcome as well.[79]

Bernstein's target here is twofold. First, he has no patience at all for those Marxist socialists who take their dominant ideological cue from early writings such as the *Communist Manifesto*. As he often remarks, here and elsewhere, the *Manifesto* contains both "utopianism of the means" and "utopianism of the ends" that Marx and Engels themselves rowed back from in later writings, even as early as the *Demands of the Communist Party in Germany* in 1848.[80] The ideological grouping for which he reserves especial vitriol on this front is Leninism, to which Bernstein refers until his final writings using the moniker of 'Bolshevism'. In its rigid adherence to the Marxism of the *Communist Manifesto*, he argues, Bolshevism entirely fails to appreciate any of the social developments that have taken place since the *Manifesto*'s writing in 1847–1848 *or* the caveats that Marx and Engels introduced into their later thinking. This leads it into a "utopianism-of-the-means" approach to realising socialism that is functionally indistinguishable from, on the one hand, utopian socialist "economic experiments" to construct cooperative, communitarian settlements against the backdrop of "inadequate preconditions" that are entirely unable to sustain them, and on the other hand, brutal and bloody anarchist methods of the "propaganda of the deed" that seek to shock society into acquiescing to the demands and power of the working class, and display a "wondrous belief in the all-powerful creativity [*schöpferische Allmacht*] of revolutionary violence".[81]

In doing so, Bolshevism has departed not only from science but also from socialism. Instead, it has become a "perversion" whose closest ideological neighbour is no longer socialism or Social Democracy, but the state terrorism of nascent fascist régimes and movements:

> It is indisputable that the system of government in reactionary Hungary and fascist Italy stands in the starkest contradiction to the liberal [*freiheitlich*] system of government implemented by Social Democracy where it has a majority. Rather, *intimately and essentially related* to it, right up to the individual details of its brutal policy of violation [*Vergewaltigungspolitik*], is the governmental system of the Russian Bolshevists.[82]

Bolshevism, Bernstein argues, has abandoned any attempts at meeting the preconditions of a viable socialist movement—a well-established capitalist economy and a numerically significant self-conscious working class—and turned wholesale to the "omnific force" of repression and coercion in an attempt to will a socialist society into being.[83] In doing so, it has "barbarised" and "coarsened the Marxian theory", and undone all the laborious work of Marx and Engels themselves in extirpating anarchist and Blanquist tendencies from the socialist movement.

Bernstein's second target, meanwhile, is what he perceives as dogmatic tendencies within the Marxist "orthodoxy" that so vehemently resisted his own "revisionist" attempts at Marxian self-overcoming. His chief interlocutor here is unsurprisingly Kautsky, whom Bernstein derides in the period of their worst mutual hostility as "the Keeper of the Great Seal of Marxism", and whose attempts to build Marxism into a "'unified system' that is to be kept sacrosanct" he castigates as an attempt to freeze Marxism into precisely the same kind of context-blind formulaic utopianism that Marx and Engels criticised in their socialist precursors.[84] The difference between Kautsky and Bernstein is ultimately a difference between two ways of perpetuating the Marxian legacy. After Engels' death in 1895, Kautsky set himself the task of expanding the purview of 'what Marxism talks about' in the vein of the mature Marx and Engels, writing copious articles in *Neue Zeit* especially that faithfully applied Marxist *theory* to questions such as national self-determination, colonial policy, trade unionism, and military questions. Bernstein, meanwhile, took the approach of continuing 'what Marx and Engels were doing' in the mature stage of their careers, undertaking deviationist revisions that faithfully applied Marxist *metatheory* to Marxist theory itself.[85] Both, he argues in *Preconditions*, are entirely legitimate ways to be Marxist; but only the latter carries out "[c]onceptual investigation, the separation of the essential from the merely incidental" in such a way that "concepts [do] not […] become superficial and deductions ossified into pure dogma":

> There are indeed different kinds of scholasticism: namely, apologetic and critical. It is the latter that has always been a bane to all orthodoxies.[86]

In effect, Bernstein's position is that Marxist theory already needs significant alterations in order to continue providing socialists with the best possible social insight:

> [N]o theoretical advance is safe from one day becoming inimical to insight in its turn, and placing hurdles in the way of the realistic-scientific assessment of things. All that is required is that the truth that it signified be conceived dogmatically as the last word on the matter, for it to itself again become a fetish that, instead of honing people's gaze for reality, more or less veils it.[87]

In other words, in order to preserve what is best about Marxism—and, in fact, to *be* Marxist properly construed—Marxists, and socialists more broadly, have to veer away from reifying Marxism.

Beyond this, it also becomes clear from these works that Bernstein does not believe that socialism can simply be narrowly reduced to a semantic equivalence with Marxism. It is important to remember that Bernstein's effort in these works is intended to provide a statement of *socialism*—not, crucially, of Marxism, historical materialism, or even Social Democracy. *Socialism Past and Present* is not a restatement of revisionism as outlined in *Preconditions*, although there are clear areas of continuity between his late-1890s writings and his early-1920s output. Nor is Marxism the main object of these ideological writings: Bernstein's object is socialism *tout court*, and Marxism is only an ancillary part of the picture. While, of course, Bernstein remains a committed Marxist and draws copiously on Marx and Engels' contributions to socialist literature, a clear sense emerges from these writings that, for him, there is rather more to socialism than Marxism.

Bernstein thus embarks on a rigorous engagement with the history of the socialist intellectual canon, specifically ideas and traditions that have become somewhat obscured by the Marxist hegemony. In doing so, he is driven by two motivations. The first is his straightforward personal preference for certain authors and arguments that Marxist socialism has largely rejected. One clear example of this is Bernstein's sustained effort to rehabilitate and recentre Lassalle in contemporary socialist discourse—an effort echoed by the socialist legal philosopher Hans Kelsen and the historian Salo Baron.[88] Bernstein gives Lassalle's *System of Acquired Rights* and *Workers' Programme* equal billing to the *Communist Manifesto*, *Capital*,

and *Anti-Dühring* in the major texts of nineteenth-century socialism, and even suggests that Lassalle's analysis of the ethical basis of workers' social claims offers a better explanation than the Marxian attempt to scientifically explain surplus value and exploitation of the motivation of class struggle—or at least a useful and necessary complement to it.[89] Another case is Johann Gottlieb Fichte, whom Bernstein cites on numerous occasions in these and other writings as a thinker whose cooption by German nationalism obscures his democratic and internationalist ideals.[90] Although he does not place Fichte on the same level as other figures in the socialist canon, Bernstein cites *The Closed Commercial State* (1800) as an example of radical jurisprudence and political economy with much profitable insight to offer its contemporary progressive successors.[91]

But Bernstein's second, stronger motivation for revisiting the socialist canon stems from his particular methodological view of how ideologies in general develop over time. In his view, ideologies at any stage of historical evolution cannot be disconnected from the preceding traditions, groups, and movements that have given rise to and influenced them. It self-evidently makes no sense to analyse, for instance, the thought of Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint-Simon without taking into account how they drew on the prior work of Étienne-Gabriel Morelly and Nicolas de Condorcet; or to gauge the innovative aspects of the Marxian theory of value without considering the many interpretations (including socialist accounts) of its Ricardian predecessor.[92] In a similar way, it is impossible to grasp the theoretical and practical activity of the contemporary socialist movement if one does not try to take into account how *all* the previous stages in the development of socialist ideology have left their cumulative mark on it. In this light, Bernstein's retelling of the socialist developmental narrative navigates a path between the dual orientations of *origin* and *legacy*—between the perspective of historical context and that of present consequence. Among the contributions to the accumulated ideological meaning of modern socialism, Bernstein of course identifies some entirely familiar figures: the utopian socialists Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Owen and their schools and followers; their scientific socialist successors Marx and Engels; as well as brief appearances by not explicitly socialist thinkers such as Thomas More, Francis Bacon, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and less well-known figures such as Gerrard Winstanley and the Levellers, and Gracchus Babeuf and the Jacobins. Others, however, are far less commonly-known, including Babeuf's intellectual heir Wilhelm Weitling; Gottfried Kinkel, who Bernstein credits with coining the term "Social Democracy"; August

Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in their theoretical rather than partisan capacities; and Lassalle and Rodbertus, who in places receive almost as many citations as Marx and Engels. All of these, and many others besides, have had their share in shaping "socialism past and present". Above all, for Bernstein, this ideological accumulation is not just an archival curio in the annals of socialist scholarship, but a live residual—often unacknowledged—force in the discourse that shapes working-class activism today:

> [*T*]*he sum total of the demands of the working class of our age* presents itself to closer sociological analysis as the *summary of the rational content of the socialist ideology of earlier epochs.*[93]

In other words, any attempt to understand "what is socialism?" today cannot limit itself to time-sliced syncretic or synoptic analysis of what holds together different definitions *now*, but must also include a conceptual-historical evaluation of what holds together different definitions *over time*. Revisiting the intellectual history of socialism is part of the vital task of understanding how past proto-socialists, radicals, and progressives have had a lasting impact on the contemporary contours of the ideology. It is the kind of ultra-*longue-durée* genealogy conducted, admittedly on a far grander scale, by, among others, Leszek Kołakowski for Marxism—and it is partly to such projects of deep intellectual recovery that Bernstein's project in these texts should best be compared.[94]

Beyond its relationship with Marxism or with the contributions of the rest of the socialist canon, socialism on Bernstein's account is intimately connected to three core concepts. The first of these, in line with his insistence on the working-class core to socialism, is the centrality of *class and class struggle*. Here, Bernstein's clarificatory and anti-reification project comes perhaps most strongly to the fore. Fundamentally, he has a historicist conception of the task of socialism and Social Democracy vis-à-vis class struggle:

> Social Democracy does not conjure up today's struggle by the workers who lack capital against the class of capitalists and their supporters from out of nowhere. This struggle would also exist without it, and Social Democracy instead regards it as its task to explain it from its original conditions, and to organise systematic work and show it purposeful direction, whereby it ensures precisely its characteristic as a driving force of culture.[95]

In other words, socialism is not engaged in changing the historical trajectory of society to bring about a workers' future; rather, this bringing-about is itself an integral part of this historical trajectory, such that fostering class struggle is part of socialism's world-historical role. This makes it all the more important for socialists to have at their disposal as accurate and up-to-date a conception of class and class struggle as possible.

For Bernstein, each of these concepts is subject to several complicating factors that pose challenges but also offer opportunities to socialists, especially those like him who come from a Marxian perspective. On class, Bernstein notes that the Marxian reading of class in terms of "identity of revenues and revenue sources" is not the dominant conception in popular understandings of the term. Far more common is a reading that looks past income sources to more visible manifestations:

> In actual societal life, the *level of income* and the *social life situation* [*Lebensstellung*] and *life conduct* [*Lebensführung*] associated with it or conditioned by it become the most descriptive measure of class belonging, while the derivation of income from work, capital, or possession of land certainly likewise remains a marker of distinction, but more for specifically economic considerations than for general social differentiation.[96]

In other words, socialists face a choice between continuing to try to base their ideological efforts on a heuristic that had limited popular currency, or accommodate vernacular understandings by switching to what would now be seen as a more Weberian reading of class. Largely out of statistical convenience, Bernstein himself seems to favour a hybrid approach based on asset wealth, the level of income, and its source in terms of broad categories of branches of production, factoring in the cross-cutting effects of professional divisions, anticipating both syncretic-compatibilist and occupation-based class accounts such as those developed by Erik Olin Wright or John Goldthorpe.[97] Further, citing Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky, Bernstein observes that there is an often sizeable distance between what he sees as objective and subjective manifestations of class.[98] While he insists that the former—"*economic* and *legal* markers" of "economic-social *situation*"—are the only proper factor in determining which class someone belongs to in a theoretical sense, in practice "social-political *consciousness*" and class self-identification often determines what class sentiments and affinities they feel. This cuts across objective class divisions:

> Hence we find […] wage-labourers who live in petty-bourgeois conditions and have the appropriate sentiments, and there lower middle classes who feel thoroughly proletarian, and so on.[99]

Worse, even this non-objective "class spirit" is "fairly uncertain", acting "more like a dull instinct than a clearly-recognised interest", and can often be derailed by "general currents of the time", including "religious or nationalistic traditions, and entrenched customs". *In extremis*, this can entirely undermine class identification:

> The individual can, under impressions of all kinds, raise themselves above the interests of their class up to the point of complete class denial [*Klassenverleugnung*], and if these cases are also not very common, then still in our time of heightened public life there is no shortage of forces that work towards dulling class sensibility [*Klassenempfinden*].[100]

Thus, from the working-class perspective, one of the major functions of pro-capitalist ideologies is to engender proletarian class denial (and other subjective class identifications, depending on the ideology in question), whereas the countervailing function of socialist ideology is to engender proletarian class sensibility.

On class struggle, the central complicating factor from a socialist perspective is that the relations between classes do not always take the overtly conflictual form that the concept of "class struggle" seems to imply. For Bernstein, this is a somewhat artificial complication, derived—once again—from a woeful misinterpretation of the *Communist Manifesto*. In his view, its famous statement that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"

> is not to be understood in the sense that the history of humanity consisted of an uninterrupted chain of class struggles.[101]

Certainly, class struggle is the motor of societal development, and the moments when societal changes take place are moments of class struggle. But, Bernstein argues, it is not the constant characteristic of historical development, and not all moments are moments of change and struggle—and cites the Preface to the 1872 German edition of the *Communist Manifesto* as evidence that Marx and Engels also shared this view.[102] Rather, in a classist gloss on Saint-Simonian models of history, he sees

history as divided into "organic" and "critical" phases of (respectively) "relatively calmer development and […] revolutionary upheavals".[103] It is down to the nature of the relevant classes and the precise stage of development production has reached whether class–class relations take the form of struggle, or as Bernstein expresses it:

> Whether these interests or goals demand the suppression of other classes or merely make it necessary to fight against them for the purpose of removing privileges and preventing the implementation of their demands or claims.[104]

Further, even in moments of class struggle, there is no reason to assume that its *factual* existence means that it necessarily has to take on a particularly violent, brutal *form*. Bernstein insists on many occasions that even an "intensification" of class struggle can be restricted to the fact rather than the form:

> It is […] a fallacy that the modern class struggle will necessarily become so acute in its continuation that its forms get into contradiction with what we regard as the highest achievements of culture: an increased valuation of life and of the personality of our fellow human beings.[105]

In other words, there is a question for socialism about whether abiding by its commitment to embody the class struggle of the working class has to entail a disposition of internecine hostility towards non-proletarian societal *strata* at all times, or whether it can evolve its methods of doing so to reflect and respect the highest norms of civilised conduct that society has achieved.

But by far the greatest complication for class struggle stems from the fact that, as Bernstein puts it, "classes as sociological entities do not struggle", and that

> [w]hat we call *class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat* plays out […] in partial struggles between particular groups, which form elements of these classes.[106]

It is extraordinarily rare for individual or even collective bourgeois and proletarians to end up in direct confrontation; rather, their mutual conflicts are mediated by representative bodies that act as pressure-valves to divert comprehensive societal contradictions into more manageable, safely

contained arenas. Chief among these are parties, which shift relevant aspects of class struggle to debates over legislation and policy, such that "the struggle between parties periodically intensifies far more brusquely than the relationship of the classes represented by them"[107] Yet herein lies the problem: parties are *not* classes, and though they "may like to describe themselves with greater or lesser justification as representatives of classes, [they] are never the class itself".[108] By hiving off class struggle to party competition, the rules of class struggle become captured by and subordinated to the not-entirely-congruent logic of electoral and institutional politics. Because parties are notionally competing for a democratic majority (even if attaining that is unlikely or a convenient electoral fiction), they pitch their manifestos and campaigns at the whole community:

> Accordingly, the programmes of all […] political parties […] reach beyond the special affairs of particular classes, and describe in more or less detail the *principles* according to which *the entire community together* is to be led or administered.[109]

Parties develop their own hierarchy of interests that departs from pure class representation, and opens the door to ideological distractions that obscure "class spirit". Specifically, because party competition is to a large extent premised on the ability of parties to erode other parties' vote share among the members of *every* societal class, they may downplay or even abandon certain interests of their founding class in order to preserve themselves, and change their underlying class character:

> Just as every individual member of modern communities has, besides the special interests that are distinct from those of other members, a number of interests that coincide with those of other members, so too with classes. And for that reason even the programme of a party that represents a very particular class interest can still exert attraction on members of other classes.[110]

The socialist movement has already felt the effects of this. On the one hand, as evidenced by its election results, Social Democracy "still does not fully capture" the votes of the enfranchised working class; on the other, it "counts people from other classes among its members".[111] In other words, instead of acting as a force to foster and consolidate class sentiment, Social Democracy as the political branch of the socialist movement appears to be entrenching class denial. Bernstein states the problem baldly:

> The party is in its entire conception and nature something that reaches further than the class. … The party contaminates the class, and it depends on the spirit of the party and its leadership whether the result is a narrowing or a broadening of the class horizon.[112]

This presents socialism with a choice: does it try to remain a class ideology, in the interests of preserving the purity of the economic struggle, or does it reorient itself as a party ideology to maximise its political appeal?

Prima facie, these observations pose significant challenges to the socialist project. If it is failing to make its account of class and class struggle convincing, or (worse) even accurate, this has potentially devastating implications for its theory and practice. In light of this, it is unsurprising that Bernstein came under serious attack for supposedly denuding socialism of its capacity to wage an effective anti-capitalist struggle. But Bernstein does not simply leave matters at identifying these problems with socialist conceptions of class and class struggle. After all, his theory is only intended to improve the concepts with which socialists are addressing class questions, not purge them from socialism entirely:

> Only once we have attained a conception of the concepts of *class* and *class struggle* that is free of all fetishism will we come to appreciate the organs and forms of modern class struggle in a way that conforms to the class development of the present day.[113]

Instead, Bernstein engages in some careful sociology in an attempt to show socialists the way towards a solution. Crucial to socialism's future prospects, he argues, is an acknowledgment that the classic picture of a monolithic bourgeoisie arrayed against the proletariat is no longer—if it was ever—an accurate view of the reality of class divisions. Again, he starts from a Marxian basis, observing that Marx's letters to the *New York Tribune* in 1852 and brief comments in Volume III of *Capital* reveal that he himself did not see class in pure bourgeois-proletarian binary terms.[114]

Bernstein updates his *Preconditions*-era analysis of the unexpected durability of small and medium enterprises with in-depth statistical analysis in *Socialism Past and Present* and other articles. He concludes that the growing number of "capital magnates", of medium and smaller capitalists, and of officialdom and the "free professions" has vastly complicated the class structure of contemporary society. Two conclusions flow from this for him. On the one hand, this development means that socialists can no

longer lazily equate 'bourgeoisdom' with mere business-ownership, but have to differentiate more carefully between different kinds and sizes of enterprise, and the levels of income they generate for their owners. On the other hand, it also means that socialists need to foster a far greater appreciation of the new societal *strata* that are emerging who fall naturally within neither the bourgeois nor proletarian 'camps':

> [B]etween the bourgeoisie proper and the working class there are also great intermediary *strata* [*Zwischenschichten*] or classes, whose interests incline partly towards one camp, and partly towards the other.[115]

To these belong not only "the army of officials [*Beamte*] of all kinds [and] the holders of so-called *free professions* [*freie Berufe*]", but also "the mass of retailers, petty mangers, and smallholders" as well as the "intellectuals", whose high societal status belies their often meagre income levels.[116] Both are factors that complicate the classic picture of class struggle—but both also offer opportunities for socialists to gain strategic advantages within it.

For Bernstein, the redress for these challenges comes from ideological and party competition itself. Here, the key is to turn precisely the complicating factors of class and class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and to the benefit of the proletariat. Socialists have to realise that the tension between subjective class identification and objective class situation is not unique to the working class—nor, for that matter, is the ideological openness to "general currents of the time". Both fractions of the bourgeoisie and the intermediary *strata* are susceptible to this:

> [I]n the bourgeoisie proper there is no shortage of elements whose class contradiction towards the workers' movement is only mediated and leaves room for political ideologies of all kinds. … [The] intermediary *strata* […] are almost universally in a constant state of restructuring, and hence oscillate in their partisan political stance. On them ideological influences, historical traditions, power relations in the state administration exert the greatest influence.[117]

The latter especially "have no firmly-delineated class interests, and form the field of recruitment for every party possible". And even among the former there is no partisan unity:

> A party of *the* middle class was possible so long as it was a matter of winning rights for the middle class against the higher classes, estates, and corporations

> that opposed it, of creating what one calls *bourgeois freedoms* and *bourgeois constitutionalism*. Once these rights were won, the bourgeois parties had to set themselves other aims to prove their reason for existing, and […] the specific class parties of the middle class were of necessity forced to quit the field in favour of other party formations.[118]

In other words, despite their hegemonic societal position, the bourgeoisie are in the process of becoming victims of their own success, and losing their monolithic identity in the face of rising social complexity and the fragmentation of interests it has as a result.

This weakening of already-dull bourgeois class spirit offers fertile ground for socialist ideology to strengthen the proletarianising elements in the subjective identities of these bourgeois fractions and intermediary *strata*. If bourgeois ideologies are prepared to play on religious or national sentiment to push the working class away from class sensibility and towards class denial, socialism is more than capable of returning the favour, and allow Social Democracy to peel off the progressive-radical parts of the non-proletarian population onto its own side in party contests. Socialism cannot abandon its working-class core and still remain socialism; but in its ideological output it can conduct a form of class struggle that abides by the highest norms of bourgeois civilisation, framing class goals and interests in a way that sympathetic bourgeois fractions feel able to endorse. Its targets in doing so are those who, like officials and intellectuals, occupy objective economic situations that place them closer to the working class, but whose subjective political identities *ab initio* lean somewhat more *embourgeoisé*. In this way, a re-evaluation of classic Marxian accounts of class and class struggle is not a gateway to socialism giving up class struggle or caving into the bourgeoisie, but refining the new tactics of class struggle to constantly-evolving new conditions.[119] Bernstein's position is simple: it is not the fact of class struggle that has changed, merely the way of conducting it under the new circumstances.

These refined conditions of class struggle and more sophisticated ways to undertake it lead onto Bernstein's second socialist core concept: a distinctive theoretical account of and practical approach to *democracy*. It is no exaggeration to say that, in Bernstein's view, socialism and democracy are so tightly linked as to be virtually synonymous; and Social Democracy as a movement is obligated to manifest this both in its social aims and its constitution:

> Social Democracy is a democratic party. Specifically, it is democratic in its *goal* and fundamentally also democratic in its *nature*. It seeks in its constitutions as much as it possibly can to bring to expression democratic fundamental principles, and through these constitutions to shape party life itself as democratically as possible.[120]

This commitment is one of the clearest cases of continuity between Bernstein's 1890s writings and these later texts, and he readily admits that he has not changed his view at all on the central role of democracy in any meaningful statement of socialist ideology. Moreover, his definition of socialist democracy is also essentially unwavering. In 1908, citing *Preconditions*, he frames democracy as

> Equality of rights among individuals and self-determination of the whole by means of majority decision in a free vote: these are the two poles of democracy when this is conceived as a principle.[121]

Over two decades later, in his 1931 defence of Social Democracy against the Bolshevist accusations of "social fascism", he phrases it almost identically as

> the demand for political *equality of rights* and *freedom of action* for all citizens of the state, and *self-government of the people* built on this right and this freedom.[122]

Socialist democracy, then, for Bernstein, is a régime of equal freedom, designed to remedy the deficits of capitalist society through extensive individual rights and institutions of self-government.

Vitally, this equality, freedom, and collective majoritarian self-determination are not just to be applied to political institutions. Truly *social* democracy, in line with the eponymous movement's stated identity, would require

> the democratisation of the state, the democratisation of enterprises, of the entirety of administration, the extension of this democracy into all domains of social life, into education [*Unterrichtswesen*], into bodily care [*Körperpflege*], into art, and into our intercourse.[123]

Social, as opposed to political democracy, requires workers' representation and ultimately leadership in all of these domains, by restricting them after the model of the democratic institutions and processes currently found in

embryonic form in the political domain. Bernstein is careful to add a clear element of instrumentalism here. Unlike bourgeois republicans and radicals, who fetishise democratic institutions *as they currently exist* in themselves, socialists see them more as a means to an end:

> [F]or us social democrats, democratic institutions are not ends in themselves but rather the means to achieve an all-encompassing, more important purpose.[124]

That purpose, of course, is that expressed by the core definition of socialist ideology: the assertion of the social claims of the working class, including the abolition of class itself and the achievement of societal control over the economy.

By far the most effective democratic instrument available to socialists to pursue this purpose under current societal conditions is parliamentarism. According to Bernstein, the essential characteristics of parliamentary institutions are their representative and consultative functions, and to a lesser degree their decision-making powers:

> A parliament is a consulting [*beratend*] and respectively also a decision-making [*beschließend*] representative body [*Vertretungskörper*]; expressed differently, it is a representing [*vertretend*], or specifically a re-presentative [*repräsentative*] assembly [*Versammlung*], which consults and as the case may be also passes decisive resolutions.[125]

For Bernstein, the key is that parliamentarism allows workers to send some of their own to the centre of legislation and administration to assert their claims on their behalf—and he makes an explicit distinction here between *vertreten* (representing) and *repräsentieren* (re-presenting) that prefigures similar usages by Anthony Birch and Hanna Pitkin and, in a related key, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.[126] In his view, socialists have grasped this to the extent that they

> take part in election campaigns and enter the parliament for agitatory reasons, but only in order to hold protest speeches and not to take any further part in the debates.[127]

This, for Bernstein, is a shocking waste of an opportunity to collaborate positively in shaping legislation and administration for all areas of society,

especially given the rising numbers of parliamentary deputies they are now starting to return. He insists that socialists must jettison their "protest politics" and take a constructive approach to parliamentary activity—an argument that he emphasises with redoubled effort in his SPD electoral campaigning after the transition from *Kaiserreich* to Republic.[128]

Above all, Bernstein impresses on socialists the fact that national parliaments determine the constitution and regulation of all other societal bodies:

> So long as the great communities comprising millions of people endure, parliaments will also continue as indispensable organs of legislation and of controlling administration, only subject to change insofar as their power relative to the central executive authority must increase, while at the same time they cede ever more functions to regional or specific self-administering bodies. But since it is the parliament that determines the composition and constitution of these bodies, […] the working class must insist on being represented in the parliaments according to its numerical strength and cultural force.[129]

If socialists are serious about extending democracy and popular control to other areas of society, they have to put at the top of their agenda seizing control of parliamentary institutions—and then using the powers these give them to their greatest possible effect. In answer to those socialists who disparage parliamentary activity as too great an accommodation to the bourgeois *status quo*, Bernstein merely points out the sheer lengths anti-socialists have gone to try to prevent Social Democracy from gaining a parliamentary foothold:

> Our opponents, the defenders of all antiquated privileges, know very well today what it means for them, and for the standard-bearers of the New, which of them holds parliamentary positions … Every prolonging of their power means for the representatives of the Old a new opportunity to contrive difficulties, to put obstacles in the path of development, to create rights and interests that can be played off against the arrival of the New.[130]

Simply put, if parliamentary activity posed no threat to the bourgeois establishment, its reactionary members would not be so resistant to extending and democratising the franchise. Granted, certainly, that there is more to socialism than politics, and more to politics than parliamentarism. But in contemporary society, parliamentarism remains an

indispensable component in socialist activity—specifically, of class struggle in the political domain.

For Bernstein, the commitment to parliamentarism as *the* form of socialist democracy stems from a "scientific" evaluation of the political capacities of the workers that form the backbone of the socialist movement. Fundamentally, he is deeply resistant to what he sees as a tendency to over-centre the working class and the mass population more generally within the socialist movement:

> I have at all times turned most decidedly against any kind of worship of the mass, and […] to oppose exaggerations that threatened to creep into socialist literature in this respect.[131]

As Bernstein observes in *Socialism Past and Present*, the socialist movement has long contained two parallel strands: intellectual radicalism on the one hand, and mass protest on the other.[132] These strands always enjoyed a somewhat uneasy and carefully-negotiated relationship until, he argues, the Marxian innovations in socialist thought decisively shifted the emphasis onto the working-class mass as the notional bearers of socialism's societal aspirations.

Yet, for Bernstein, there remains a clear tension between the expectations of socialist intellectuals and the reality of the working-class mass in the degree to which the latter manifest the former's ideas of progress and progressiveness. This is made agonisingly evident by the susceptibility of proletarian voters to non-socialist ideological overtures and "general currents of the time":

> Anyone who lived through [the 1887 and 1907] elections […] saw what great parts of the people still are not led in their political conduct by meticulous considerations but rather by mere *moods*.[133]

Beyond the working class, which at least has regular contact with socialist ideological content through literature and mobilising activism, the situation is even more dire. Based on their voting habits, certain elements in public opinion are inherently conservative, and far from being a potential recruiting-ground for Social Democracy rather constitute a proven threat to it. The cause, for Bernstein, is the systematic reactionary ideologisation conducted by bourgeois media sources:

> But who influences this mass? … Most of them acquire their instruction through their paper, and the paper that they read is in the great majority of cases one or other of those news-reporting papers [*Neuigkeitsmelder*] that under the slogan of "impartiality" are politically nailing shut [*Vernagelung*] people's minds.[134]

In a comment in an earlier draft, he goes as far as to call this process political "stultification of the people [*Volksverdummung*]"—the direct opposite of the enlightenment that the bourgeois media public sphere is supposed to provide.

Superficially, Bernstein's approach might come across as a classic expression of intellectual snobbery, an exasperation that the working class 'simply does not know what is good for them'. But this view is hard to square with his frequent positive comments about the intelligence of the workers he personally encounters, and about his own and other socialist writers' intellectual indebtedness to their insights and experience. He is sympathetic to the intellectual self-doubt and anxiety that a lack of class privilege and formal education can confer on workers:

> Precisely the most intelligent elements there often suffer from an excessive mistrust in themselves, caused by their consciousness of the inadequacy of their formal knowledge, the value of which they overestimate.[135]

And he insists that socially-progressive leaders could do nothing better than to engage with the workers on their own terms:

> [A]nyone who tends to interact with workers to any degree—and every social policymaker should be doing so—will soon discover that, on average, they are rarely themselves "uninteresting" as individuals.[136]

In actual fact, Bernstein's view is again one of wanting to avoid fetishisation. It is a form of elite idealism in socialist theory that sees workers as *already completely* the bearers of socialist progress—a reification of workers that does not conform to the reality of the changing composition and intellectual *niveau* of the working class. For Bernstein, if workers are not politically capable, this is because Social Democracy still has a lot of work to do to enable them to make the most of their capacities *on their own behalf*, and in the *interim* to "grasp[ ] the possibilities and the value" of the democratic franchise:

> [W]here it is exercised by them not as the exercise of an abstract right, but rather as a conscious and decided transfer of will, then voting will be a *need* for them as well, they will insist on it, they will conceive of the franchise not as a *permission* to vote, but as an *important privilege* that has been *won*, and exercise and as the case may be *defend* it too. What matters is to educate the voters to this conception—more today than at any earlier time.[137]

Bernstein's objection to worker-centrism is not an ontological one. It is more a comment about the need for a far more extensive degree of capitalist development and proletarianisation to have taken place before workers are socialised by their conditions to the extent of being mature bearers of socialism and socialist democracy.[138] It is not the limits of the working class itself that are exposed; instead, it is the limits of the maturity of the society that is failing to educate and inform them, and the limits of a theory that is *for* the workers but not fully *of* the workers that Bernstein is calling out here.[139]

In view of this, however, Bernstein finds it all the more unthinkable that introducing plebiscitary democratic institutions—mechanisms of "direct legislation"—would have anything but a reactionary effect under current social conditions. With a nod to Lassalle, he takes the view that the fullest possible democratisation of social institutions, including political legislative bodies, is fundamentally the correct view for socialists to commit to, but one that has to be modulated by an appreciation of social conditions:

> [E]ven the most correct principle, taken to extremes, becomes a *nonsense*. But that precisely is true of the idea of introducing direct popular legislations where the conditions required for it—the consolidation of the democratic foundations of national existence [*nationales Dasein*] and of democratic thinking among the people—are not yet present.[140]

By contrast, he advocates active participation by workers who have already achieved extensive political-economic maturity and experience in the existing parliamentary institutions and procedures of electoral democracy.[141] Given that rigorous social insight has, as yet, only percolated through to a minority of the wider working-class population, representative democracy actually provides a form of participation in legislation and administration that is better-suited to the current needs and capacities of the socialist movement:

> It is "in substance the intellectually most active elements of the population" who led the election campaigns for parliamentary bodies, but direct legislation would place the decision "in the hands of the great mass of the intellectually sluggish, politically indifferent, and narrow-minded members of the popular community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]".[142]

Key here is the differential sense of responsibility that accrues to elected representatives relative to that of the wider population:

> Elected deputies are certainly not infallible, and the majority of them act under the influence of class prejudices and all manner of special interests. But they act on the basis of reports and deliberations that enable them to give a far-sighted verdict, and in the awareness of the great responsibility that rests on them. That is the case with only the fewest individuals in a population of millions. Where this responsibility is divided among millions, individuals barely feel it, and are hence always inclined to indulge their mood if not their *whimsy*. As a result of this, the larger the country is, the more easily a popular referendum comes down to a *game of chance*, even in the most important questions.[143]

But that is not to say that Bernstein rules out the prospect of any direct democratic empowerment, or any popular check or balance versus parliamentary bodies. Echoing post-WW1 debates about the role of workers' councils or plebiscitary mechanisms within the Weimar constitution, Bernstein suggests that certain powers could already be ready for mass-democratic application:

> The rights of proposal and dismissal could be demanded as a complement to popular representative bodies [*Volksvertretungen*], since the doubts that counsel against it are outweighed by several advantages that this would bring along with it.[144]

Crucially, Bernstein is not ruling out direct democracy permanently, but places specific conditions on its introduction, namely: (1) democratic sentiment must become more embedded among the population, and (2) democratic institutions must be more widespread across society. It is because he thinks that these conditions will not be fulfilled anytime soon—and because it is the best hope to start bringing about this fulfilment—that he maintains such a strong role for parliamentarism in socialist ideology.

The final core concept, to which all other aspects of Bernstein's account are subordinated, is what he suggests all socialists ultimately view as the goal of their endeavours, that of *socialisation*. It is here that Bernstein undoubtedly advances by far the most visibly beyond his discussion in *Preconditions* and the 'Problems of Socialism' articles, where in his passages on the "most immediate tasks of Social Democracy" he comments on a variety of other policy concerns, including foreign policy and national interests, colonial policy, agrarian policy, the role of cooperatives, and municipal policy, including discussions of public services and the right to work.[145] Bernstein's comparative lack of focus in his earlier writings on the definition or goal of socialism, in favour of his initial attempts at evaluating the workers' economic struggle and Social Democracy's political struggle, earned him a reputation for insouciance towards the movement's social purpose. Bernstein insists this reputation is unjustified:

> The author of this work is accused of the following statement: "The final goal is nothing, the movement is everything!" Yet it has not occurred to me to come out with so clueless a statement. … I have for what one commonly calls the "final goal of socialism" extraordinarily little inclination and interest. … but I was a long way from establishing an objective guiding principle with a claim to universal validity.[146]

In fact, Bernstein engages with the question of the realisation of socialism on multiple occasions: as early as 1902 in his rebuttal to Kautsky's *Social Revolution*, and later on in *What is Socialism?*—including the extract printed as a flier for circulation to post-Revolution workers as the flier 'What is Socialisation?'—as well as the final chapter of *Socialism Past and Present*. As Michels remarks, it is the underlying unifying thread that connects Bernstein's mid-career "theoretical" comments in *How is Scientific Socialism Possible?* (1901) to his late-career "practical" equivalent in *The Socialisation of Enterprises* (1919).[147]

Bernstein's understanding of socialisation is characteristically nuanced and pluralistic, oriented towards the possibilities of economic reform in both present and future society. But his accommodation of potential bourgeois political allies never causes him to lose sight of the socialist core of his economic aims: collective societal, i.e., workers' control of production. Despite his relative warmth towards a modicum of collaboration with bourgeois liberals and centrists, his approach to Social Democracy's goal goes far beyond their proposals. A socialist society cannot just be achieved

via a democratically-administered welfare state, or a régime of rights and justice. Instead, it depends on a process of comprehensive economic transformation. Bernstein distinguishes between a narrow and a broad reading of how such transformation is carried out, for which he respectively uses the terms *Vergesellschaftung* ("societalisation") and *Sozialisierung* ("socialisation"). Rejecting the frequent Marxian use of the former label to describe "comradely collective work or cooperation", Bernstein only applies *Vergesellschaftung* to "situations where the collectivity as state or community takes the place of private enterprise". *Sozialisierung*, meanwhile, is a more expansive concept,

> not tied to the form of taking over the economy by the state itself. Strong control by the general public, and its strong participation already constitute far-reaching socialisation.[148]

This more-or-less stable distinction runs throughout his writings on socialisation, and is crucial to his comments on the range of alternative options socialists have at their disposal to achieve social control over the economy.

For Bernstein, both *Vergesellschaftung* and *Sozialisierung* are centrally concerned with transforming economic *management*:

> Not the question of *power* nor the question of economy on the side of *property* defines the problem of a future socialist society, but rather the problem of economy as a *problem of administration*.[149]

All the forms of *Vergesellschaftung* mooted by his socialist contemporaries—from *Verstaatlichung* [nationalisation] to *Verkommunalisierung* [communalisation]—need to ensure not only social ownership of enterprises, but also their operation along "social" lines. It is no use to the working class if (e.g.) the state or other workers' representatives take control of private businesses, only to then operate them on a state-capitalist basis:

> What […] does it amount to if the state has a few business enterprises more or less and then perhaps even still manages them in a capitalist way?[150]

Bernstein's position is unambiguous: the goal of Social Democracy must be socialism, not capitalism with a working-class face.

Bernstein's view of when and how socialisation should be carried out is informed by two primary considerations. The first is the conditionality imposed by society's underlying economic situation, and the overarching requirements this imposes on both policymaking and business operations. Bernstein's main concern, mirroring his gradualist political inclinations, is that any changes in economic ownership and management must be calibrated so that they do not seriously impair the continued functioning of the economy. He emphasises repeatedly that the well-being of the mass population, "which today more than at any earlier time is reliant on work", is closely tied to society's economic health, and that "no societal class is more strongly interested in the continuation of production than the working class itself".[151] While socialisation is undoubtedly the goal of the workers' movement, achieving this goal becomes wholly meaningless if it destroys the productive motor of society, leading to mass impoverishment or emigration of the working class. Accordingly, a scientific approach to socialisation requires a careful analysis of which sectors of the economy are ripe for social takeover:

> One must examine which branches of the economy or groups of enterprises are suited to this, which can be taken over and overseen by society to begin with best, most quickly, and with the greatest effective force, and what one will still have to leave in private hands for the time being, so that economic life in general continues on its course, so that production does not stagnate.[152]

Here, again, Bernstein's insistence on the importance of fostering the maturity and political-economic experience of the working class comes to the fore:

> [F]rom a working class that has passed through the schooling of legislation in the state and in the administration of the communities, that is organised as a party and in trade unions, it is surely to be assumed that it, even if complete political power falls to it, it will know how to adopt and choose its measures.[153]

In other words, the educative effect of participation especially in the parliamentary part of class struggle is key to ensuring a disciplined, successful transition to socialisation later on down the line.

This leads directly onto Bernstein's second consideration: the impossibility of fully carrying out socialisation at all without extensive prior socialist reforms to other societal domains. This consideration goes to the heart of Bernstein's view of societal development, namely that pressures and desires for change must align in several areas of society in order for change to actually come about:

> Many ideas in history have only made an impact once a threshold number of elements coincided whose temperaments were disposed in favour of them on account of their social situation.[154]

This is true not only of different social groups but also the operations of different social domains. Politics, law, the economy, culture, are all quasi-autonomous, and activity within each them advances at its own pace.[155] It is only through concerted, corresponding (here, socialist) agency in all of these domains that major forward steps in society take place. *Contra* Kautsky, Bernstein insists that a socialist economic revolution is not the precursor of socialist changes in the various parts of the superstructure, but happens alongside it:

> [C]hange in the economic foundations belongs to social revolution, and the radical transformation of the superstructure is not to be separated from it. The process completes itself under continuous reciprocity. … [This is] not to be understood in the sense of a necessary parallelism of chronological order, but it rules out an interpretation that presumes that they will be wholly consecutive in their timing.[156]

Consequently, it is wrong, and an expression of vulgar economism to think that socialisation could be carried out perfectly *before*, or *without relying on*, extensive socialist efforts in non-economic struggles. Orthodox *attentisme* and rejection of the parliamentary struggle, above all, only make socialisation more difficult in the long run:

> The more societal conditions worsen and intensify *before* the "day of the revolution" […], the more difficult becomes the task to be solved "on the day after", the more problematic becomes its fruitful solution. To turn it around, the more has already been achieved on this side in accordance with this solution, the more relaxed we can be about what will happen afterwards.[157]

Gradualism, in other words, is necessary on both sides of socialists' ascent to power when they carry out their practical tasks.

In this light, what changes between *Preconditions* and his later writings such that Bernstein feels able to address the question of socialisation somewhat more freely and directly? Put simply: the context in which he is writing, in terms of economic conditions and the state of play in other societal domains. In the 1890s, capitalism was in a process of exuberant self-reinvention, at the same time as imperialist monarchism was on the rise in Germany and across Europe. By the 1920s, European economies were wracked by the destruction and indebtedness from four years of brutal war, with additional burdens in Germany's case due to the post-WW1 reconstruction conditions, but at least on the political side the hated *Kaiserreich* has been replaced by a Republic in which Social Democracy was sure to play a major role. Ever conscientious in maintaining a healthy balance between the diagnostic, critical, and positive sides of his theoretical work—as he comments in the introduction to *Socialism Past and Present*—Bernstein hence takes the opportunity to explore what options this new Republic offers to realise "a piece of socialism".[158] *Prima facie*, he offers a general formula for the socialisation of enterprises, based on the nature of the product they put out:

> *I consider the following to be capable of socialisation: the manufacture of products that are independent of personal taste, of fashion, etc., which evince a great degree of similarity, satisfy a widespread need, and have a large turnover.*[159]

For Bernstein, natural resource extraction and the manufacture of semi-finished products are industrial categories that fit this description, and in general terms thus lend themselves to socialisation—bolstered for Bernstein in the case of the former by his view that raw materials "are of right the property of the general public [*Allgemeinheit*]".[160] The only mitigating consideration Bernstein is willing to admit here is the extent to which costly risk-taking by enterprises in these industries is something that the state is in the financial position to take over, or whether this justifies retaining a role for private enterprise for the time being. By a similar logic, he extends the capacity for socialisation to transport, especially railways and light railways, as well as to the insurance and branches of the banking industry—though again, the risky activity of securities trading is one that he thinks could only be detrimental to state finances.

Here, Bernstein draws the line, arguing that the crushing weight of bureaucracy would kill off the creativity, inventiveness, and diversity of taste and fashion that is integral to high-end production. But that is not to say that there is no role that social control can play here. Rather, the onus moves from direct economic socialisation to policies instituted through the political and legal domains:

> Socialisation can be brought about by taking over certain industries directly, whether in the form of state-owned enterprise, municipal enterprise, or Reich enterprise. But it can also take place if the general public intervenes ever more strongly in the control of economic life through laws and ordinances.[161]

Bernstein reels off a list of legislative advances that, in his view, have helped bring social control over the economy closer to reality: factory laws, commercial safeguards, arbitration courts, wage offices and minimum wages, price determination, and most recently the workers' rights of industrial co-participation instituted by the 1920 Works Councils Act [*Betriebsrätegesetz*].[162] All, for Bernstein, are "steps towards socialisation", by which social control can be established "from another side far more comprehensively than […] where the state undertakes it itself".[163]

In a similar vein, he approvingly examines models of mixed enterprise circulating after WW1. He makes special mention of the "compulsory syndicates [*Zwangssyndikate*]" championed by the industrialist and liberal politician Walther Rathenau, which would feature state intervention in price determination and profits levels:

> In this way, the share of society and its control of production can certainly be systematically, gradually extended ever more strongly from various sides, without for that reason completely stymying the creative activity of private enterprises.[164]

Both reveal the sheer possibility and urgent necessity of reforms to be carried out before socialists can achieve a full takeover of the economy. Summarising his view, Bernstein returns to a comment from one of his 'Problems of Socialism' articles, written in 1898: "There can be more socialism in a good Factory Act than in the nationalisation of a whole group of factories".[165] In short, the mixture of economic constraint and political freedom that Germany faced meant that socialists, in Bernstein's

view, had to think creatively about how to achieve social control of the economy *without* necessarily carrying out the blanket socialisation of all enterprises they might like to see.

Ideology between Science and Utopia: The Prospects for Bernsteinian Socialism

Taken together, the elements and themes that Bernstein explores in his grappling with questions of social theory and social-democratic practice combine into a statement of socialist ideology: its core concepts and assumptions, its instruments and its aims. Specifically, "Bernsteinism" is a statement of what would now be called *democratic* socialism, in contrast to the authoritarian systems that sought to claim this label exclusively for themselves in the decades after Bernstein was writing—although he himself would utterly repudiate these attempts as even more of a mockery than the Bolshevism he so severely criticises here. For Bernstein, commitment to socialism is integrally and unshakably tied to commitment to democratic activism in and over representative parliamentary institutions, as the most sophisticated available form of conducting class struggle and the most plausible means to achieve social control over the economy. This view ultimately leads him to adopt a critically supportive 'yes-and' approach to all the theoretical and practical advances socialism had achieved in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He is fascinated by the rise of sociology and social psychology, and campaigns vigorously for both to be given appropriate attention in socialist thought; in return, he is acknowledged and respected in his own right as a "man of science" by his academic contemporaries, including (critically) by Wagner and (sympathetically) by Michels.[166] Bernstein engages in extended defences of the analogies between historical materialism and Darwinism, against both the methodological content and social-political implications of social-Darwinism, and seeks to better define the relationship between socialism and social science.[167] He rejects the individualist tendencies that he associates with bourgeois biases in social analysis, and seeks to accommodate the Marxian understanding of class divisions to alternative income- or status-based class definitions as well as some organicist views of society as a whole.[168] Bernstein is deeply suspicious of the new 'social' garb with which other ideologies have ostentatiously invested themselves, and takes considerable pains to demonstrate the at best partial adequacy of the remedies they

offer, compared to what socialism strives for.[169] He is preoccupied with achieving societal control over production using institutions that are popularly accountable, participatory, and above all capable of being wielded by the working class.[170] And he is determined to turn the tables on those trying to erode working-class support for Social Democracy by winning over progressive bourgeois ideological fractions and social *strata*—radicals and republicans, officials and intellectuals—to not just social, but outright socialist causes.[171]

Bernstein's commitment to his distinctive brand of socialism stays constant throughout his mature activity as a socialist ideologist. But the nature and focuses of this activity change drastically over the course of his life. This is partly a result of the changing circumstances that formed the backdrop to these debates, as the socialist movement moved from despondent opposition to the heart of government, at the cost of significant losses in principled and strategic unity at national and international levels. Proposals that were essentially an idle indulgence in the 1890s—in Bernstein's terms, utopianism of the worst possible kind—were very much on the immediate agenda by the 1920s. Certainly, the *final* goal was still "nothing", but the movement had manoeuvred itself into a position where part of its daily struggle (the "everything") was starting to bring some parts of that goal to fruition. But the progress of socialist ideology and the movement fighting to assert it in the way Bernstein envisaged soon ground to a halt. The Weimar Republic and its hopes for the realisation of socialist democracy and societalised economic management were comprehensively dashed by the Nazi seizure of power and the devastation of WW2. Attempts to reinvigorate them by a European socialist movement severely weakened by twelve years of persecution and murder faltered in the face of an alternative "social market economy" model pioneered by welfare-concessionist conservatism and Christian democracy with an ordoliberal face.

Under the twin chilling effects of the spectres of Cold War communism and anti-communism, socialism found itself caught between two vitriolic camps. Both saw its reticence in offering full-throated support for their ideological programmes as tacit abetment for that of their inveterate enemies. This, in turn, was compounded by the neoliberal revolution in conservative politics and the capitalist economy, which led many socialist parties to shear away many of their longest-held core principles in a bid to widen their electoral appeal beyond a class base that was systematically shrinking under the joint onslaught of deindustrialisation, financialisation, and globalisation. Some of the socialist inheritance from the 1890–1930 period

has survived, including many of the examples of indirect social control of the economy that Bernstein offers as alternative forms of *Sozialisierung* to pure *Vergesellschaftung*: working time directives, minimum wage laws, public-private enterprise models, and the much-vaunted model of workers' *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination), alongside the liberal innovations of welfare and public service systems. But the raw irony of reading much of Bernstein's thought today is quite how remote and utopian it seems, now that the trajectory of history has moved off in a direction that neither he nor his fellow socialists could foresee and to a large extent could do little to steer. In short, socialism and socialisation as Bernstein discusses them seem to a large extent more devastatingly distant now than at any time since the reaction of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

As with all cases of historical social thought, this raises the question of where it leaves Bernstein's socialism. Does Bernsteinism belong to 'the definite past', placing its author among the slumbering figureheads of Europe's intellectual tradition? Or should it be seen, as Bernstein himself saw the canon of socialism, as part of the cumulative inheritance that has shaped 'the long present' of the modern socialist movement? Is it a curiosity for exhibit in a museum, or does it have the qualities of a vital force that, as a kind of social-democratic equivalent to Soviet views of Lenin, "lived, lives, and will always live"? It is perhaps the most prudent approach—and doubtless the one that Bernstein himself would take—to tread a nuanced path between these two extremes. Societal conditions have obviously moved on far too far from the hopes of early-1920s Weimar for Bernstein's specific recommendations at the end of *Socialism Past and Present* and throughout these texts to act as straightforward directives for left politics today. Instead, the point is to trace the underlying logic of Bernstein's arguments, the metatheory behind his theory and the coherent thread behind his practice, and undertake a self-overcoming, self-improving revision of his account in its turn. The aim with such 'revisionism-of-revisionism'—as was Bernstein's aim in conducting his deeper exploration of socialist ideology in the wake of the revisionist controversy—is to use the insights this yields to inform projects of rejuvenating theory and practice across the left in general, and within Social Democracy in particular.

And there is little doubt that it is in dire need of rejuvenation. To focus only on the German example, at the moment of writing, the SPD has now spent over a decade at levels of popular support below those it enjoyed in Bernstein's day, and in recent years has slid to below the levels

it enjoyed when Engels was still alive. That picture does not become much less bleak when the calculation is expanded to include Die Linke (Left Party), which is arguably the closest modern successor to the USPD/KPD breakaways of the 1910s–1920s, with this 'red–red' combination together managing barely more than 32% on average (and even as low as 24%) since 2010. Since 2018, German Social Democracy has all but lost its status as undisputed leader (or even leader of any sort) of progressive politics to the Green movement, whose party representatives in Germany are enjoying levels of popular support that dwarf those for green politics in most other European countries. In this, ironically, they resemble the SPD of Bernstein's day; after all, of the nearly 5 million European voters that socialist parties were winning in the early years of the twentieth century, 3 million at least were located in the German Reich alone. But the insurgent Greens are at risk of becoming the modern equivalent of the unreliable Free-Minders. Though they have taken part in 'left bloc' or 'popular front' 'red–red–green' coalitions with SPD and Die Linke, they look increasingly likely to be seduced into bourgeois coalitions with the Christian-Democratic/Christian-Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the liberal Free-Democratic Party (FDP)—the modern ideological successors of Wilhelmine *Zentrum* and National-Liberal tendencies. *Mutatis mutandis*, a similar picture threatens the socialist movement in other countries too—with only a few cases where left consolidation has proven even partway durable and successful.

The lessons that Bernstein can offer here are twofold. First, socialists need to be acutely aware of the 'balance of ideological forces' within the societal context in which they are operating. In his history of the German Revolution, Bernstein analyses the parties in the new Republic—from the KPD all the way across to the reactionary German National People's Party (DNVP)—based on their likely reliability as supporters of the new régime and hence as allies for Social Democracy. In his ideological texts, the lesson is applied more broadly than party politics. Socialists need to keep a close track on the extent to which their own and other ideologies—anarchism, liberalism, Christian democracy, and conservatism in all their shades—have won over public opinion. Of course, electoral victory is a major barometer of such success, but Bernstein also measures it by the extent to which an ideology's principles have transcended the ideas and interests of the *strata* or classes which they originally or immediately serve to become more-or-less universalised across all parts of a given society in a certain period.[172] On that level, his view of the balance of ideological

forces is more sociological than political: socialists need to assess their strength not just within society as a whole, but within each of its constituent *strata* and classes—which, in turn, requires them to know exactly how all of these are positioned (and changing in their position) at any given point in time.

Second, flowing on from this, socialists need to factor into their ideological calculus the fact that 'not all that socials is social'. One of the most painful realisations from the evolution of ideologies in the twentieth century has been that labels such as *social*, *socialist*, or close cognates such as *people's*, *workers'*, *democratic*, and *labour*, have often been used to disguise policy programmes that deviated wildly from the labels' roots on the progressive left. As Bernstein observes for the nineteenth-century landscape in *Social Liberalism or Collectivism?*:

> In particular, the particle *social* has been furnished with all manner of conceivable epithets, and has been reframed in every possible guise, in order to satisfy the need for comprehensive descriptions of certain systems or for features that differentiate certain schools of thought of a socialist, and as the case may be also of a non-socialist character—from the shareholder beneficiary [*sozietär*] system of the Fourierists to the sociality-based [*sozialitär*] one of Dühring, from the social conservatism of the defunct Wagener faction to the specific social revolutionism of the Blanquists.[173]

In other words, socialists also need to keep close tabs on the extent to which they are winning inevitable contestational struggles over the 'ownership' and interpretation of the concepts and concerns which they themselves first introduced to social theory and social policy. If they do not do so, they are at risk of losing not only the ability to change society for the better, but even the linguistic tools to express the changes they aspire to see.

In sum, the lesson of Bernsteinism is that, in order for the parliamentary road to socialism to work, socialists themselves must be constantly alert to how the ideological landscape around them is evolving, and how best to craft their response. Bernstein's analysis from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century gives certain indications here. One is that socialist (or working-class) consciousness is something that has to be not only generated and raised, but also subsequently maintained and regularly reaffirmed. Other ideologies and movements have grown wise to the building-blocks of socialist consciousness, and are by now well-versed in offering countervailing proposals and visions to sow distraction and disharmony within the socialist 'base'. Socialism thus needs to keep up a

steady flow of ideological 'micro-nudges' to keep its adherents on the track it has established for them, and prevent any loss of the gains it has made in winning over their 'hearts and minds' in the first place. Part of this is that socialism needs a strong press machine, providing both news (information) and opinion (dispositions) to counteract the deleterious ideological tendencies of the mass media—either via party organs (like *Sozialdemokrat*, *Vorwärts*, *Neue Zeit*, or *Sozialistische Monatshefte*) or party-adjacent independent outlets. Further, socialism needs to attract and sustain a cadre of high-calibre intellectuals who are not afraid to drive projects of ideological self-overcoming and self-reinvention in the movement, as extensively as is necessary at any given time. Their expertise should be based as far as possible in cutting-edge, rigorous social research, and crucially they must be given the latitude to carry out their work independent of party-activist interference. Socialists must prioritise raising the economic, political, and cultural maturity of the main bearers of socialism—the working class, and more generally those without privilege and advantage in society. At least initially, this will probably partly require them to lean on sympathetic allies who are a little further ahead in this self-development. But the main route to doing so is to let the working class and the disadvantaged make the most of every opportunity to gain additional aggregate experience for the movement in 'how to run a society': legislation, administration, and business-management. Only in this way can socialism be as creative as it needs to be in developing new methods to move incrementally towards social control of the economy and the democratisation of society within the parameters imposed by the *status quo*. Altogether, the socialist movement is called to sustain a constant and all-encompassing dynamo of ideological activity. It is this light in which Bernstein's contribution is to be understood: not just as a way to define socialist *ideology*, but also as a way to carry out socialist *ideologisation*.

Notes

1. For a selection of historical overviews of socialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see: Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Donald Sassoon, *One*

Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century (London: I. B Tauris, 2013 [1996]).

2. Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 55–60; Walter Bryce Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), pp. 157–91.
3. Eduard Bernstein, *Preconditions of Socialism*, Henry Tudor (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Henry Tudor and J.M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
4. For a selection of theoretical examinations and intellectual biographies of Bernstein and his work, see: Pierre Angel, *Eduard Bernstein et l'Évolution du Socialisme Allemand* (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1961); Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1952); Helga Grebing, *Der Revisionismus: Von Bernstein bis zum 'Prager Frühling'* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1977); Bo Gustafsson, *Marxismus und Revisionismus: Eduard Bernsteins Kritik des Marxismus und ihre ideengeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1972); Horst Heimann and Thomas Meyer (eds.), *Bernstein und der Demokratische Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1978); Thomas Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1977); Manfred Steger, *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
5. Present volume, pp. 69–76, 343–76, 445–60, 513–28, 663–74.
6. Marius S. Ostrowski (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein on the German Revolution: Selected Historical Writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 6.
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PART I

Socialism Past and Present: Historical and Contemporary Disputes Within Socialism

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CHAPTER 2

Prologue

The present work, with the exception of its final chapter, reproduces the content of lectures that I held during the summer semester of 1921 at the University of Berlin. In response to a request issued on the part of academic circles without my knowledge to enable me to lecture at the university, the Ministry permitted me to hold guest lectures, and in the given circumstances this permission now also meant that I had the duty to make use of the possibility of speaking to students in the rooms of my *alma mater*. And specifically, it seemed to me to be appropriate, at a time where the great party of socialism to which I have now belonged for going on 50 years has achieved decisive influence in the Reich—which has now become the Republic—to speak about the historical and contemporary disputes within socialism, that is, to identify the differences of opinion that have obtained and in some cases still obtain among the representatives of socialism about its fundamental ideas and their application.

Regrettably, however, it has not been possible for me to address more than a part of the pertinent questions. My extraordinarily limited available time allowed me only one hour a week for these lectures, and even less than the academic hour tallies with the astronomical hour, does the academic semester coincide with the calendar half-year. So I was required to be selective, and to leave to one side many a question of significance that lies close to my heart. Nevertheless, I believe that, all the same, I have said enough in my lectures that is worth knowing about the fundamental questions of socialism to justify their publication in written form.

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Regarding the form of the lectures, it should be remarked that I did not conceive of my task as holding teaching lectures in the scholastic concept of the word. Rather, depending on the nature of the object, I have changed my way of treating it, and I have sought to bring some into view more deductively, others more inductively-genetically. Hence also the asymmetry in scope between the lectures, which are here denuded of their format as addresses and instead presented as chapters. Further, the fact that they partly deal with questions with which I have already preoccupied myself in works that were published by me previously makes it unavoidable that here and there I have now repeated isolated aspects of what I said there. Leaving them out would have seemed to me to be unnecessary if not impermissible pedantry.

As indicated above, I did not get around to addressing the final chapter, which deals with the nearest possible applications of socialism, in my lectures. If I have added it here, then I did so not only out of a desire to give a work that is critical for the most part as positive a conclusion as possible. It was and is of importance to me to show that the perspective that underpins it and which I have now been defending for pretty much a quarter-century does not by any means lead, as many have feared, to a pessimistic view of things and an indifferent form of behaviour arising from it. Only those fall prey to pessimism who expect more of humans than they can accomplish, and measure things against the yardstick of their wishes. With this remark, however, I am by no means saying that one should not set oneself great goals—what would Social Democracy be without them?—but that one will achieve nothing great if one does not look at things as they are, but, where millions of humans come into question, expects of them things for which extraordinary characters are required.

End of November 1921.

Ed. Bernstein.

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CHAPTER 3

Socialism as a Social-Scientific Theory of Development

Determination of concepts—The age of speculative socialism—The conflict between radicalism and rationalism in speculation—Theoretical utopianism—From utopianism of the goal to utopianism of the means—The fundamental ideas of Marxist scientific socialism—Socialism and class struggle.

Before approaching the task of discussing disputes within socialism, one will have to say something about what one even understands by socialism—how widely one wants to see the framing of the concept drawn. The word socialism has been defined in very many different ways. It is frequently used as the expression for an imagined state of affairs that is underpinned by a certain property order and economic order, and which is to be embodied in an entire ideal state. Others set it as equivalent in meaning to the movement or struggle by societal classes to realise such an economic order, and for others still it is the collective term for a number of demands for institutions that are underpinned by certain ideas of right and ethical concepts. All these readings are justified insofar as they refer to certain forms of socialism, or indicate certain aspects of the socialist movement. But none of them exhaust the object.

In textbooks too, or in compendiums by social scientists, we come across very different definitions of the concept. Not to go too much further back into history, and to restrict ourselves to Germans, we find in Schmoller a different reading than in Roscher, in Sombart another one

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than in Schmoller, in Oppenheimer a different one to Sombart, and so on.[1] It would not be uninteresting to hold them up against each other for comparison, to establish what they have in common, and to see whether they cannot be brought, so to speak, onto a common denominator. Yet a different route seems more advisable to me, namely that of looking at the historical forms in which it has appeared. By means of them, we will, I believe, best be able to inform ourselves about what we have to understand under socialism today.

The most general and for that reason certainly also the most superficial conception of socialism is that of a societal state where there are neither rich nor poor, where many things are common to all, and a strong fraternalism prevails. Where these characteristics are absent, where far-reaching factual community, far-reaching ethical commonality [*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*], and the absence of great differences in wealth are lacking, the substantive attributes of socialism are missing. Conceived in this way, it is much older than its name. While this first emerged in the nineteenth century, one already finds the object as an idea or a movement in the age that we call Antiquity. Wherever humans no longer live in simple tribal associations that change their place of residence, but rather have become settled [*sesshaft*], and have created states, that is to say territorially-divided communities, which encourage the formation of great differences in wealth and inequalities of rights, sooner or later among individuals or *strata* the wish sets in to remove these inequalities, and finds in the illustration of better societal conditions its ideological, and in the struggles to achieve them its political manifestation. The history of Asiatic and Near-Eastern civilised peoples, the history of the Greeks and Romans offers us accounts of such movements, perhaps only incompletely but all the same unmistakably. As a source for this one may refer to Robert Pöhlmann's history of antique communism and socialism, a work whose critical statements I have several strong objections to raise against, but from which one can see how far not only social struggles, about which the history of the Ancients tells us, but also the more-or-less fantastical constructions or illustrations of ideal states that have been passed down to us—sadly often only very sketchily—are capable of historical evaluation and hence also require it.[2] Whether one may conceive of original Christianity, which underwent its actual development in Rome, as a socialist movement may be left open. It is well-known that its socialist character has frequently come under challenge, and one may merely wish to conceive of it as an ethical movement. But even if, in its overall appearance, it should not have a claim to be described as

socialist, then it has still undeniably been the nourishing source of many socialist theories and movements. Evidence for this is provided by all manner of chapters from the great literature of the Church Fathers and the Scholastics, and there are examples of a series of communist and semi-communist Christian sects which still belong to Antiquity, which are followed by similar ones in the Renaissance and the Reformation.

In the latter age also emerged the book whose title has become the collective term for the entire group of descriptions of speculatively-constructed communities or ideal states, namely the treatise *Utopia* by Thomas More.[3] One can say that this work by the characterful Chancellor of Henry VIII of England has given life to an entire literature. For it was a sensation in its time, and was translated into the most diverse languages. The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are full of descriptions of imagined ideal communities, political novels [*Staatsromane*], as one also calls them in view of their narrative form. Not all of them can claim to be described as socialist, and there is definitely no shortage of utopias that are bourgeois in nature, according to our conceptualisation today. That applies, for instance, to the incomplete utopia *The New Atlantis*, which has as its author the famous philosopher of the empirical method Francis Bacon.[4]

In the socialist utopias of the era that began with the Reformation, a graduated development can be observed in two directions: firstly, a tendency to outdo one another in fantastical illustrations, and secondly, a tendency towards the greatest possible rationalism in their speculation. This latter tendency is the more important one for our examination, for it was a lever to further social insight, and led gradually to a scientific treatment of socialist endeavours. The authors of rationalist utopias of socialism seek to correct their precursors, and although that proceeds for a long time without the form of polemic, then still in various authors can be observed a tacit challenge to the ideas of their predecessor or predecessors.

These are already serious disputes; the successor rebuts the predecessor without naming them.

But what the utopias had in common, what was in fact the unique characteristic of utopias, is the decisive role that *contingency* [*Zufall*] and the will conditional [*abhängig*] on contingency play in them. For a long time, in these accounts, the described ideal state was created by the intervention of an uncommonly wise personality, a lawgiver or ordering prince, so that, if by chance this prince or lawgiver had not been born or had died before their time, the people or country in question would not have had the

opportunity to experience the ideal state. Later, in the time of the French Revolution, the individual will or creative drive of well-doers in the construction of the utopia is replaced as a creative force by the *collective will* of the followers of a particular idea. But this collective will, even where it is imagined as the will of an entire people, is still only a matter of contingent chance. Whether the group or the popular mass fights for the idea simply depends on how far and how strongly it is seized by the propagation of this idea, but the emergence of the idea itself is still substantially dependent on chance.

At the turn and during the first third of the nineteenth century, substantial progress takes place here. In the history of socialism, this is the era of the great, critically-oriented utopians, Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and Henri Saint-Simon and their schools.[5] The identifying characteristic of these socialists, which distinguishes them from the utopians of the eighteenth century, is the role that the idea of development plays with them, and their endeavour to build on what exists—to further develop the world that they have in front of them. Robert Owen, in his socialist treatises, points to the capitalist factory that was on the rise in England, and the conditions that it had created, and takes them as the starting-point for socialist reform policy. Charles Fourier, in still strongly petty-bourgeois France, seeks to found socialism as an ideal psychologically, and to realise it in practice by the route of cooperatives, whereby his plan for communal cooperative politics is of particular interest. Saint-Simon is so much a theorist of development that it becomes doubtful whether one can still even call him a utopian at all, just as at the same time he is so much a man of reality [*Wirklichkeitsmensch*] that one is entitled to dispute his claim to be included in the history of socialism. If Fourier is strongly influenced by Morelly, the imaginative author of the utopia *The Basiliade*, then Saint-Simon is by Condorcet, the *encyclopédiste* and author of the scientific treatise about the progress of the human spirit and the capacity of humanity for perfection.[6] Among the Saint-Simonians, we find among other things already the division of the history of progressively-developing nations into organic and critical periods, i.e., periods of relatively calmer development and periods of revolutionary upheavals.

But with all three, with Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon and their followers, despite their striving to be scientific and to connect to what already exists, the *invention* of the means to realise socialism plays the decisive role; where they want to be practical, they work out *formulas*, and again and again they are in danger of reverting to utopianism. In place of the

utopianism of the goal comes a *utopianism of the means.* The literature of socialism in the second third of the nineteenth century is full of writings that are utopian in their means, whereby again one can distinguish a utopian reformism and a utopian revolutionarism. The one becomes fixated on economic experiments, which due to their inadequate preconditions must necessarily fail, while the other pays homage to a wondrous belief in the all-powerful creativity [*schöpferische Allmacht*] of revolutionary violence.

Here now, two great men bring about a fundamental transformation in people's views, who today are widely recognised as the founders of scientific socialism: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Why does their doctrine bear this name, and why does it have a particular claim to scientificity? Because it penetrates more deeply and systematically than all the socialist theories formulated before it into the nature of the forces and laws of development of societal progress, and bases the struggle for socialism on a theory of development that has been thoroughly worked through, in which the idea of the *organic* nature of social development comes into its own, as distinct from a conception of this development as a more mechanically- or chemically-determined process.

Will and idea, which are overestimated in some way or another by the utopians, in Marx and Engels' theory are not, as has frequently been assumed, lowly valued or even ignored as driving forces of social development—without the idea there is no will, and without the will there is no action—but they are identified in their *social conditionality* [*Bedingtheit*]. It is shown how they depend on the material conditions and forms of humans' societal existence, for which the determining factor is the mode of production of people's living commodities.

For this production is decisively determined by the *tool* [*Werkzeug*] that the human being has at their disposal; but on this tool, which prescribes their mode of work, at the same time depends humans' intervention in the laws of nature and with that finally also their level of insight about the world [*Welterkenntnis*].

Socially viewed, it is the tool that determines whether things are produced individualistically or collectively.

In Antiquity, and even up to the start of the Middle Ages, production is overwhelmingly individualistic; only the rise in world intercourse and world trade in the period of the great discoveries leads to collectivistic work in production. The economic form that is given the name manufacturing begins to spread, as does production under the leadership of

large-scale merchants, who deal out work to craftsmen [*Handwerker*], but then later engage workers in larger workshops, known as factories. The merchant thus becomes the factory-owner [*Fabrikant*], and in the factory refined tools are used, for which natural power is used as a technical engine. The tool becomes the machine, and the craftsman becomes the factory-worker. Production in the factory becomes to an increasing degree collective work, and since capital is needed to establish and maintain the factory, capital increasingly dominates production.

With the rise of capitalist production, and in the competition of the capitalists amongst one another, the *struggle over surplus labour* acts as an *objective* driving force—that is, over the gross value of production less the costs of investment, raw materials, auxiliary materials and tools, specifically machinery, which does not have to be paid to the workers as wages. This struggle over surplus value, as Marx calls it, leads in due course to a growing enlargement of the factories, because this permits a greater economy of forces, thereby enabling the undercutting of the competition, and an increase in turnover. The further social consequence of the enlargement, or rather the concentration of enterprises is the densification of the population in cities and countries. The industrial centres, the cities grow; by degrees there comes about what one can call the *urbanisation* of the country; more than in any previous age, city culture also captures the population of the flatland and leaves its mark on the entire society.

All of this creates the material preconditions for a new societal order; for it is associated with a new arrangement [*Gliederung*] of societal classes, as whose most important moment must be mentioned the rise and growth of the class of permanent [*ständig*] wage-labourers, the industrial proletariat. This radical economic change makes necessary a new *order* of *rights* [*Rechtsordnung*], and *new social institutions* and laws [*Gesetze*]. For the social reformer, it is now no longer a matter of inventing ideal societies and devising formulas, but rather of *discovering* social *necessities.* But the strongest subjective driving-force in the realisation of these is the working class, the proletariat. Its material and intellectual needs step ever more into the foreground, its conceptions of right conquer public opinion. *And the sum total of the demands of the working class of our age* presents itself to closer sociological analysis as the *summary of the rational content of the socialist ideology of earlier epochs.*

And so, by means of Marx and Engels' theory, we come to a new definition of socialism that can be formulated approximately as follows:

Modern socialism is—

The distilled encapsulation of the intellectual content of the political, economic, and general cultural endeavours of the workers who have attained an awareness of their class situation as well as those of their coequivalent societal *strata* in the countries of capitalist development, and the struggle to realise these endeavours.

To the elaboration of this theory in the socialist world and to its interpretation and practical application in individual cases are linked the most noteworthy disputes of socialism in past and present.

Notes

1. Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943), German doctor, sociologist and political economist, supporter of Zionism and of liberal-socialist *rapprochement*, contributed to sociology of the state, democratic theory, and the laws of societal transformation. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Roscher (1817–1894), German historian and economist, supporter of liberal constitutionalism and founder of the 'Older' historical school of economics. Gustav Friedrich von Schmoller (1838–1917), German economist and social scientist, the main figure within the 'Younger' historical school of economics, characterised by a rejection of mathematical modelling and a concern for social policy reforms during periods of heavy industrialisation. Werner Sombart (1863–1941), German economist and sociologist, theorist of the stages of capitalism and originator of the concept of "late capitalism", member of the 'Youngest' historical school of economics, initially a Marxist but later turned towards more nationalist views.
2. Robert von Pöhlmann (1852–1914), German ancient historian, who focused especially on the social structure, economic history, and demography of ancient cities.
3. Thomas More (1478–1535), English statesman and Renaissance humanist social philosopher, author of *Utopia* (1516).
4. Francis Bacon (1561–1626), English philosopher and statesman, made significant early contributions to empiricism and the scientific method, author of the incomplete utopian novel *New Atlantis* (1626).
5. François Marie Charles Fourier (1772–1837), French philosopher, founding figure in utopian socialism, advocate of social cooperation through residence in class-structured *phalanstère* apartment-complexes, inspired a movement of intentional communities, especially in the USA. Robert Owen (1771–1858), Welsh textile manufacturer and social reformer, supporter of the cooperative and trade union movement, founding figure in utopian socialism, promoted experimental attempts at forming socialist communi-

ties, notably at New Lanark, Scotland, and New Harmony, Indiana. Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), French economist and political theorist, influential on utopian socialism, liberalism, and anarchism, stressed the need for society to prioritise the interests of the 'industrial class' (businesspeople as well as labourers) over the parasitic 'idling class'.

6. Étienne-Gabriel Morelly (1717–1778), French tax official and utopian writer, proposed a constitution for an egalitarian society without property, marriage, organised religion, or police, which influenced much later French radical thought. Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794), French philosopher and mathematician, supporter of economic liberalism, constitutional government, and general and racial equality, supporter of the Girondin faction during the French Revolution.

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CHAPTER 4

The Natural Rights Justification of Socialism

The naïve concept and scientific theory of natural rights—Natural right—Rational right—Philosophy of right—Natural rights speculation throughout history—Natural rights in the great revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Natural rights and the communist theory of Babeuf—Natural rights as the foundation of all utopias—The inadequacies and rightness of natural right.

It lay in the nature of things that socialism in previous centuries until far into the nineteenth century was almost exclusively justified through natural right. The fact of the association between socialist theories and natural right is extraordinarily interesting. It has also variously been highlighted by scholars or authors who have concerned themselves with the theory of socialism; but as far as I know, a systematic representation of this connection, which treats it historically as well as conceptually, is still lacking. This would be an extraordinarily fruitful examination, thoroughly worth the undertaking, and I even believe that it would make a good topic perhaps for a dissertation. For this connection namely continues on through the entire history of socialism, from the time where there was anything at all that had a claim to this name, up until the most recent times. Even as late as 1875, a commission of the socialist parties of Germany, which were then in the process of unifying, while elaborating the draft of a party programme, gave socialism a completely natural-rights-based justification, and thereby attracted extraordinarily sharp criticism from Karl Marx. The justification namely read as follows:

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> Labour is the source of all wealth, and of all civilisation; and since it is only through society that generally productive labour is possible, the whole product of labour, where there is a general obligation to work, belongs to society,—that is, to all its members, by equal right, to each according to his reasonable needs.[1]

That is, as anyone can easily see, expressed in natural rights terms, and not scientifically.

What do we understand under natural right? In my view, in most definitions two quite different objects are confused with one another. Two conceptions of it compete in the history of the idea: a naïve, primitive conception, that instead of the term "natural right [*Naturrecht*]" would be better expressed as "law of nature [*natürliches Recht*]". The French also say "*droit naturel*" and the English "natural law", so always a law of nature. The concept here is derived from a presumed natural state of affairs, or is related to the nature of humanity, and is only in this sense natural-philosophical. But then there is a scientific rights-theoretical conception of the concept of natural right, according to which it is understood as the summary of general fundamental rights principles, which are won independently of the fundamental principles and provisions of locally- and temporally-changing positive legislation by means of the investigation—uninfluenced by external impacts, by power relations, or by interests—of the nature and purposes of legislation in general, as well as the fundamental conditions of development of the human personality and of humans' most harmonious possible coexistence: insights that raise claims to show the way for positive legislation, and which one can justify scientifically. Natural right in this sense thus wants to stand above positive law. Research can self-evidently only solve this task by means of investigating reason, specifically if it exclusively and unreservedly follows the laws of reason. Hence one has chosen for the natural right of more recent times, conceived scientifically in this way, the name "rational right [*Vernunftrecht*]". This indicates what has become of the original natural rights ideas over the course of their development. But it does not reveal the role that the concept of natural rights has played in history. Rational right can be something quite different than what humans have understood for hundreds of years under natural right. By contrast, the other comprehensive term "philosophy of right" is impossible to object to, since rational right precisely wants to establish the highest right, the nature of what right should be, the right that emerges from the concept of rightfulness [*Gerechtigkeit*].

The question about such a right comes to the surface where positive law is recognised or felt to be unjust [*ungerecht*]. There humans then naturally fall back on other waymarkers for the right that they want to have. It is the most diverse factors to which they appeal when they do so, *prima facie* mostly metaphysical, transcendental powers, which are also conceived in natural terms; but they always recourse to a higher power that stands beyond positive legislation, whether that be reason in general, justice, a deity, or nature. As result of this, natural right has all along had a humanitarian tendency, and it has been apt for the cause of the oppressed or the respectively disinherited. In a further sense, it is thereby at the same time revolutionary, and has accordingly conventionally been officially frowned upon. In history, it has frequently been proclaimed by founders of religions.

If we pass over the Oriental peoples and ask which people in the old world contributed the most in establishing fundamental natural-rights or rational-rights principles, then this has undoubtedly been the Greeks. In the philosophy of the Greeks, natural-rights speculations play a very significant role. They are an accompanying phenomenon to the political struggles that play out in the more advanced city-states of Greece, above all in Athens. This too is noteworthy, that, if a hitherto recognised philosophy is unsettled, overlooked, or neglected—an occurrence that is mostly only transmitted to us via patchy reports and hence seems abstract—this often in fact has a quite real background in the political struggles that played out at approximately the same time or shortly beforehand. Like religious traditions, state institutions already in the ancient world are dragged before the judgment-seat of reason and examined as to how they conform to the natural needs of the citizens of a perfectly complete community. We find this in Plato and his predecessors, in Aristotle, but above all in the history of the Stoa, Zeno and his students. The Stoa has contributed the most to emphasising the natural-rights side of legislation and to unsettling the reputation of positive law. That also happened on the part of the students of the Stoa in later Rome. Here I only need to mention Seneca. Among the Christian sects, it is the concept of being a child of God, specifically equality before God, that gives occasion for natural-rights conclusions or is interpreted in their favour. Augustine, probably the most significant of the Church Fathers, indulges in natural-rights contemplation, and the great Scholastic Thomas Aquinas developed an entire system of natural right, which he sought to bring into alignment with the fundamental principles of canon law. But the Roman church, which at the time

of Thomas had attained the height of its temporal power, sensed the subversive tendencies in these natural-rights theories and explications and accordingly rejected them. But all the more strongly are they cultivated in history among the heretical sectarians of the pre-Reformation and Reformation age. In the concept of the word "*Ketzer* [heretic]", which is derived from Cathar, cleanser, the natural-rights tendency, the recourse to critiquing reason, is already hinted at—albeit limited to the interpretation of the Bible. I must decline to illuminate this important epoch in individual detail, as interesting as it would be to follow the entire development of the Christian sects from our perspective up until the Reformation.

After Protestantism had won in a series of states, it was in Holland the famous legal theorist and statesman Hugo de Groot, Latinised as Grotius after the custom of the time, who in his work *De jure belli ac pacis* gives the first exhaustive systematic representation of the law of peoples, and grounds it in his introduction on a natural-rights justification, which has taken on foundational significance for the science of natural right.[2] Today, we esteem Grotius as the original scientific founder of natural right. But the communist and semi-communist sectarians of the later Reformation and the following century appeal even more emphatically to natural right—and this conceived precisely as a law of nature. I only need to refer to these great periods of struggle in general terms, to the Peasant Wars, the struggles of the Anabaptists, etc.[3] Here one finds again and again the appeal to natural right as the justification for their demands.

Here, it is appropriate to interpose a remark. One can trace the entire movement of socialism back to two great stems or roots from which it draws its power. The first root, and the stem that has developed out of it, are the real struggles of the respectively oppressed, neglected classes or *strata* of society. But the other stem is the ideology that is predominantly represented by scholars, thinkers, priests, etc., and seemingly has no direct connection with these struggles. It is even a fact that often such ideologues, who have elaborated far-encompassing communist theories, have been cool, equanimous, almost dismissively hostile towards the practical struggles. All these struggles are mostly not waged about great far-encompassing goals, but rather about certain limited demands, which are not always well-formulated and can seem to be damaging to a greater cause. So it comes that even if the ideologues are, without knowing it, quite frequently influenced by these struggles, and if, *vice versa*, those who are struggling have, without knowing it, taken on quite a few things from them—so, if the threads run across and back between them—still for a

long time the two stems go their way separately. Only in more recent centuries do they find themselves together or do they grow together. Karl Kautsky and yours truly once came up with such a family tree of socialism—which has also been reproduced—where we showed how the two stems branched out and ultimately grew together in the nineteenth century, and that, as we believe, this growing-together was brought to its height by the Marxist justification of socialism.

The appeal to natural right takes place in the most various ways. Indicative of this is the saying that was wheeled out, if not already in the German Peasant Wars, then definitely in the English Revolution:

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?[4]

The people sought to prove its natural right from the Bible, which after all at first knows no class distinctions. This plays a major role in the English Revolution. England was, after it had survived the "Wars of the Roses", as an island country spared from the wars that ravaged the continent. Political development could here take place with less disturbance, and so already in the middle of the seventeenth century it had its great political revolution. Previously, the English called this great Revolution the "Rebellion", and only called the uprising that took place a lifetime later, in 1688, and which sealed the fall of the Stuart dynasty, the Glorious "Revolution". Today, it is generally recognised that the first movement deserves the name "Revolution". Already the great leaders of the bourgeois-noble class who fought against the absolute monarchy of Charles I relied in their argumentation among other things also on natural right. But even more the classes that stood behind them, the Independents, made use of it, and strongest of all it is expressed in the doctrine of the sect that called itself the "True Levellers". One sect among the Independents was called by its enemies "Levellers"—*Gleichmacher* [equalisers]—and then adopted this name. These were for the most part political radicals. But then there was also a group which went even further, formulated communist ideas, and called themselves the "True Levellers". In this group, one finds natural rights ideas expressed the most clearly. Its most significant advocate was Gerrard Winstanley, from whom we also have an interesting utopia, the ideal picture of a communist state, which had long remained unnoticed until it came to my attention during my work in the library of the British Museum. From this Winstanley there exists a work that carries the title *The True*

Levellers Standard Advanced. It appeared in 1649, and begins with the following sentence, which is very characteristic of it:

> In the beginning of Time, the great Creator Reason, made the Earth to be a Common Treasury.[5]

One should take a note how rationalistically here not "the deity" but rather "Reason" is presented as the Creator. Winstanley then goes on to explain that only through violence did servitude come into the world, and *that* was Adam, the father of original sin. He conducts a political etymology and explains: "A-dam … doth 'dam' up the Spirit of Peace and Liberty."[6] But reason justified the demands of the True Levellers.

In general, the English Revolution boasts an extraordinary wealth of political literature. One is uniquely moved by a remark to this effect in the most famous of the flyers that called for the murder of Cromwell. This almost poignantly-written pamphlet stems from a former follower of Cromwell, and has the title: *Killing No Murder*. It came out in 1656, when one still only had small hand-presses, and begins with the words:

> It is not any Ambition to be in Print, when so few spare Paper and the Presse.[7]

Among the pamphlets of the True Levellers, whose communism was substantially land communism [*Bodenkommunismus*], there is also a pamphlet with the title *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, in which all transcendental religion is rejected very energetically. The same happens in Winstanley's work *The Law of Freedom in a Platform*, in which he develops his utopia.[8] There too he fights against transcendental religion in the most determined way. Like the greatest part of the radical literature of the time, the entire work is kept rationalistic, and the communist idea is justified as a rational right founded on natural right. This movement of the True Levellers is the precursor of the great movement of the Quakers, which is introduced in 1653 by George Fox. The Quakers are rationalists, even if with a bit of mysticism.[9] The inner light that is freedom, which speaks out from human beings, shall decide everything.

Bourgeois authors of significance from that time, who likewise argued based on natural right, are above all the poet Milton and the very interesting statesman James Harrington, the writer of *Oceana*, and similarly the theorist of the authoritarian state, Thomas Hobbes. From England, which was now the harbinger of Revolution on the continent, this conception

and way of thinking transfers over to France. Already at the start of the eighteenth century, France had its radical communist in the well-known atheist priest Jean Meslier, who did not proclaim his teachings as a clergyman, but set them down very stridently in writing, published after his death as his testament by Voltaire, initially in extracted form.[10] This work is entirely atheistic, and justifies a radical communism in absolute natural-rights terms, the "equal right of all to use of the earth".

As a theory of society, Meslier's communism is still fairly rudimentary. Much more significant as a communist is Abbé Morelly, about whom personally one knows very little. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, he published a heroic poem, the *Basiliade*, and then wrote in defence of the ideas expressed in it the work with the identifying title *Code de la nature—Code of Nature*. This appeared in 1750, and for a long time was attributed to the great *encyclopédiste* Diderot. In it, Morelly develops a complete philosophy of nature: nature has furnished the needs of human beings in such a way that they always to a slight degree exceed the limits of their strengths. Otherwise the human being would be no more social than the animal. Among human beings, as nature wills it, wishes and concerns shall strengthen our moral attraction towards one another, and from the tension of these driving forces shall proceed a benevolent disposition for all. It is extraordinarily characteristic how intentions, purposes, and goals are attributed to nature here. In this, all the same, natural philosophy spills over into speculative fantasy. But this way of arguing dominates the general way of speaking and thinking for a long time. Everything now comes back to nature, every possible purpose is implied to be willed by nature. Nature has contrived this or that in such a way that human beings do whatever. It has deliberately placed the needs and strengths of human beings in such a relationship that the individual human being cannot fulfil their needs at all, and is forced to live socially. As with Winstanley, everything is traced back to nature. Morelly continues:

> that is why nature has distributed strengths among people in such a way. But to all it has given the fruit-bearing field, the ground too, in an equal way as undisputed property. The world is a table for all, which is decked for all,[11]

and Morelly identifies the problem as being that of finding such a situation, such a constitution, in which the human becomes as happy and beneficent as it is possible to be at all. That is the leading idea for the utopia that he develops. Not just that it is decisive for him to construct the

most complete state possible, but that only such a state is complete where human beings are naturally, i.e., by the nature of things, so happy and beneficent, or, as one says later, fraternal, as possible. That is the foundation of his communism, which made a great impression for a long time and, as we said, was attributed to Diderot. Morelly certainly also influenced the famous Abbé Gabriel de Mably, whose writings are partly likewise communist, e.g., those about the rights and duties of the citizen, and the work *Doubts Proposed to Philosophical Economists.*[12] As regards the critique of economics, Mably is even more critical still than Morelly.

But also the purely bourgeois school of the physiocrats points, as already the name implies, to nature as the appointed regulator of human society.[13] It is the time where the idea of economic liberalism is on the rise, which in England is represented by Adam Smith and his followers. The fundamental principle applied: *Laisser faire, laisser passer*! Let it go, let it happen, the world regulates itself by itself! Make as few prescriptions as possible! This was a doctrine of the physiocratic school, and an intermediate position between it and the communists is taken by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the writer of the *Contrat social*, which as a societal contract conceived as a contract of the people, i.e., democratically, he too justifies in terms of natural right.

One knows what a tremendous amount of radical literature preceded the Revolution in France, how many authors before it rattled at all the traditions there were—not only communists and socialists, but also liberals like Voltaire and the entire school of the *encyclopédistes*, etc.[14] Then the Revolution takes place, and one of its first legislative actions is the proclamation of The Rights of Man, a thoroughly natural-rights construction, which shall apply above all legislation, that means, that shall point the way for the legislation that the French Revolution shall now create. It had its precedent in 1776 in America, with the foundation of the United States of America. The colonies, which at that time revolted against English rule, posited a formulation of their rights that claimed them as the general rights of human beings and citizens. When the Dutch freed themselves from Spain, they also spoke in this way. And even the Bill of Rights that the English parliament drew up in 1688 contained elements of general ideas of right. But human rights as natural rights find their sharpest expression in the Constitution of 1793, which the radical French Convent created after the fall of the Girondists, and which it prefaced with the declaration of human rights. In the introduction to this declaration one can read:

> The French people, convinced that forgetfulness and contempts of *the natural rights of man* are the sole causes of the miseries of the world, have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration these sacred and inalienable rights.

In the third article it says:

> All men are equal by nature and before the law.

and in the sixth article:

> [Liberty] has nature for its principle, justice for its rule.[15]

These are the two most important articles that emphasize the natural-rights conception. That as a theoretical justification this does not stand up to critique need not be further proved here. But from this conception are derived democratic rights, and from it three years later, after the constitution was confirmed by oath, Babeuf's conspiracy took its intellectual inspiration. The conspiracy of Babeuf and the Society of Equals is the classic example of the derivation of socialism from natural right.

François-Noël Babeuf, who after the customer at the time gave himself the first name Gracchus, and also gave the organ he founded the name *Le Tribun du Peuple*, can be regarded as the most consistent representative of the derivation of communism from the idea of a right determined by nature.[16] Outlining the Conspiracy of the Equals more precisely belongs to a treatise that concerns itself with the history of socialism in detail, so is not appropriate here.[17] The Equals were the most extreme offshoots of the Revolution, and it is indicative that the leading members altogether belonged to the *stratum* of intellectuals. It is completely wrong to conceive of their movement as a class movement of the proletariat. Of course, the Equals agitated among the people, sent their messengers to the factories that existed at the time, the larger workplaces and workshops of Paris, thereby sought to gain influence over the workers and also seemingly found it. It was even said that the Conspiracy of the Equals, which had ultimately attracted several thousand members, had all the prospects of success in its favour. That is how the French radical writer Georges Avenel put it in the Paris *Siècle*, and from there the statement passed on through an entire series of socialist treatises about it. And one also finds such a statement already in Philippe Buonarroti, the member and classical

historian of the conspiracy.[18] But that is the product of an entirely naïve conception. It had no prospects of success whatsoever. The form of its organisation was such that it could deceive itself about its possibilities; but at the first attempt to put the plan they had devised into practice, it completely and woefully failed. Yet that has naturally nothing to do as yet with the appraisal of the idea underpinning Babeuf's communism. Babeuf developed it in several articles in his newspaper, and in one of his famous articles, which appeared in the *Tribun du Peuple* on 30 November 1795, absolute equality is categorically presented as a natural right. It says there:

> We have established the precept that *full equality is a natural right*, and that the social contract [Ed. B.—the idea of the *contrat social*, which was posited by Rousseau and has played such a great role in the French Revolution] is far removed from limiting *this natural right*, but merely will provide each individual its guarantee, etc., etc.[19]

Later, we find in April 1796 in the manifesto of the Equals, which was drawn up by Sylvain Maréchal and contains the wonderful line "may all culture perish if only equality is brought about", as its introduction the statement:

> *Equality, the first wish of nature…*[20]

So nature does not only have a will but also wishes. In another manifesto, which gives an explanation of the doctrines of Gracchus Babeuf, the first paragraph reads:

> *Nature* has given all humans an equal right to the enjoyment of all goods.

But nature is not in a position itself to realise this right. Hence the second paragraph reads:

> The purpose of society is to defend this equality, which in the raw state of nature is often endangered by the strong and the weak, and to increase the common enjoyments of life through the active cooperation of all.

And the third paragraph reads:

> Nature has imposed on everyone the duty to work. No one has ever been able to withdraw from this Duty without committing a crime.

Nature is appealed to once again, nature with its will. It only remains to mention paragraph 10:

> The purpose of the Revolution is the removal of inequality and the restoration of general well-being.

Everything is traced back to the will and the intentions of nature and an imagined state of nature, in which general well-being is supposed to have prevailed. But as regards the latter, Babeuf nevertheless already betrays his doubts when he says that in the raw state of nature the weak and the strong have endangered natural equality.

The Conspiracy of the Equals was the last great stirring in the French Revolution that proceeded from natural right. After it, smaller uprisings and assassinations by democratically-minded elements still take place but the movement itself goes backwards. The epoch of the Directory is followed by that of the Consulate, and then the imperialist Wars of Bonaparte—the first Jacobin wars were, after all, wars of defence—lead to defensive wars and wars of conquest becoming blurred together, so that wars which in the nation's imagination were for liberation led to renewed domination.[21] Only towards the end of the Restoration, two years before the Legitimists too were toppled in July 1830, Buonarroti published in Brussels the history of the Conspiracy of the Equals, which made a very deep impression and soon led to new conspiracies by socialists. Besides, Buonarroti was one of the Carbonari, and under his influence emerged a conspiratorial sect that received the name "Babouvists", and whose followers later call themselves the "Party of the Blanquists", after their outstanding leader Auguste Blanqui.[22] Besides this movement, the socialist idea yields a series of perverted variants in France, and one can say that the entirety of French socialism in the middle of the nineteenth century, if one examines it more closely, is ultimately justified in natural-rights terms. That is, e.g., also the case with Charles Fourier, whose theory in its fundamental ideas goes back to Morelly, who, as we have seen, lets natural predispositions be decisive for the structure of the socialist system. Already with Morelly, one finds the idea that natural predispositions and inclinations have the potential to construct a societal state that rests on complete freedom and equality. All natural inclinations and passions are innately justified, and are no vices so far as one only gives them the possibility of actuating themselves correctly. Fourier also counts inclinations as equally justified that are commonly regarded as unlovely, such as obsession with

variety [*Abwechslungssucht*], ambition [*Ehrgeiz*], pugnacity [*Streitsucht*], etc., and has constructed an entire system for how these inclinations can be led to the best outcome for society. He believed that, in the vein of Newton, he was formulating a second law of attraction.

In other countries too, in Germany as well, we find the idea of equality defended and justified in natural-rights terms in the most various forms by socialists, in England by Robert Owen and his school, in Germany by the League of the Just [*Bund der Gerechten*] and its sometime most major representative Wilhelm Weitling, whose book *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom* rests to a high degree on Babouvist ideas, which he came to know in Paris.[23] But by virtue of the fact that these systems, as many correct ideas as they otherwise contain, consciously or unconsciously base themselves on the natural-rights perspective, they are still in their nature utopian. For they forget that the human being is not only a product of nature, but over the course of time has also become a product of history and of societal conditions, which have developed in them for the first time many inclinations and needs that they do not have by nature. Yet as products of nature, all humans have been endowed with certain equal needs from the outset. Humans naturally have to an equal degree, if not quite in equal complexion, needs for sustenance, the need for shelter, etc.; everyone has a series of rough needs in common. But if one wants to construct a society out of the human beings that one finds available, then one must also examine: what are their social, their historically-developed needs, what circumstances has historical development created, and what is it necessary and possible to change under these conditions?

With this objection, the significance of natural-rights or rational-rights considerations should not at all be in any way underestimated or dismissed. If one wanted to do so, then this would amount to endorsing so-called positive right, the historical conditions that have set in and propagated themselves within an epoch just because they are historical, and attributing to them a perpetual duration, a kind of sacredness. That would naturally be totally wrong. The idea of a natural right has had a tremendously great significance in history and science at various times.

The idea of a right that stands above written law [*geschriebenes Recht*], which is independent of a given historical development and positive power relations, was in some circumstances the protest by a progressive spirit [*vorwärtsstrebender Geist*] against the continuation of inherited institutions, states of affairs, and perspectives that had become unjust, it was the insurrection, so to speak, of the respective *Zeitgeist* against the dominion

of tradition, against the rule of right that had become wrong [*des Unrecht gewordenen Rechtes*], the thought of it the refuge of the oppressed and the neglected in society. So it does not occur to me at all to dispute that reflecting on a theory of right that stands above positive right that has become historical has its justification. The rights-theoretical perspective, the enquiry after proper right [*richtiges Recht*], as one calls it, is a very significant endeavour, which carries on throughout the entire history especially of the liberal school of right. I am using the word "liberal" here not in its partisan sense but rather in the wider historical sense, as the great idea of freedom that found its legal formulation in the French Revolution and includes in itself the fundamental idea of all progressive movements that continues to take place over the course of history, namely the right of the emergent New against the antiquated Old. The idea of this right is the liberal rights idea—not in the partisan sense but rather in the great historical sense. One can also call it the revolutionary rights idea.

There is an entire literature about rational right. Almost all rights theorists have sought to engage with it, almost all poets and thinkers preoccupied themselves with it. The words that Goethe puts in the mouth of Mephisto in the study scene in *Faust*, these oft-cited verses:

> Statutes and laws through all the ages
> Like a transmitted malady you trace;
> In every generation still it rages
> And softly creeps from place to place.
> Reason is nonsense, right an impudent suggestion;
> Alas for thee, that thou a grandson art!
> Of inborn law in which each man has part,
> Of that, unfortunately, there's no question.[24]

They are the *cri-de-coeur* of the natural-rights perspective, the protest against positive right of one who suffers under tradition, the recourse to a right that stands higher than that recognised at that time. That Schiller also put in the mouth of Stauffacher in *Tell*, in the famous, in my view the most beautiful scene in this poem, the conspiracy scene on the Rütli. After listing all the hardships that the Swiss have suffered, Stauffacher calls out:

> Is there no help against such wrong as this?
> Yes! There's a limit to the despot's power!
> When the oppressed looks round in vain for justice,
> When his sore burden may no more be borne,

With fearless heart he makes appeal to Heaven,
And thence brings down his everlasting rights,
Which there abide, inalienably his,
And indestructible as are the stars.[25]

He appeals to inalienable human rights, and Stauffacher continues: "*Nature's primeval state returns again*". It goes likewise with the appeal to natural right versus historical right or the older wrong. Yet when we criticise natural right, as we have said, the concern is not that every recourse to a right that stands above positive right should be rejected, but only that one should become clear about where the limits of such right lie. What can natural right create, what can it prove? It can certainly prove the correctness of certain rights concepts, depending on whether these have become appropriate for the time, but what natural right cannot prove alone is that an entire societal organisation has become obsolete, has become ready to be replaced by another one, whereas the socialists of that epoch cultivated the imaginary notion that they could through natural right alone demonstrate the necessity of removing the given societal order.

Yet the natural-rights derivation of socialism became by necessity the cause of all manner of disagreements among socialists and then itself a matter of controversy within socialism. Polemics about its application continue in various forms throughout the entire socialist literature. But the natural-rights conception itself was criticised with the greatest harshness by the two great thinkers Marx and Engels in their engagement with post-Hegelian philosophy, and with the German socialists influenced by it as well as by the French utopians. This applies quite particularly to a manuscript of which regrettably only half has been published so far, namely the critique by Marx and Engels of the work by Max Stirner *The Ego and its Own*.[26] Stirner counted as the most radical social philosopher of his days. The first sections of Marx and Engels' engagement with him have been brought out in the *Dokumente des Sozialismus*, which were issued by me and ceased publication in 1905. The manuscript with the unpublished part is still in my keeping. Now Stirner, who denied everything holy, because he still again recourses to natural-rights ideas in his arguments, is indicted of himself being an ideologue with his exaggeration of the ego, and is ironically called "Saint Max" by Marx and Engels—the worst thing that could happen to him.

But even of the socialists who believed they were proceeding scientifically by appealing to economics, a great part have remained stuck in natural-rights thinking.

Notes

1. James Harvey Robinson (ed.), *Readings in European History, vol. 2* (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1906), p. 617.
2. Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, Stephen C. Neff (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
3. The German Peasants' War (1524–1525), a major failed economic and religious revolt by peasants and farmers across parts of German-speaking Central Europe, the most significant popular insurrection prior to the 1789 French Revolution. Like the previous *Bundschuh* movement and Hussite Wars, the revolt drew on the emancipatory principles of the nascent Reformation, and enjoyed particular support from radical Protestantism, especially the anti-aristocratic and anti-militarist teachings of Anabaptism.
4. The saying is even older than Bernstein realises, and is first associated with John Ball (1338–1381), an English priest and ally of John Wycliffe and the Lollard movement who played a major role in the English Peasants' Revolt (1381).
5. Gerrard Winstanley, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced: or, The state of community opened and presented to the sons of men* (London, 1649), p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 7.
7. William Allen, *Killing No Murder: With Some Additions Briefly Discourst in Three Questions* (London, 1659), p. 3.
8. Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform: or, True magistracy restored* (London, 1652). See also Geoffrey Robertson (ed.), *The Levellers: The Putney Debates* (London: Verso, 2007).
9. The Quakers, or Religious Society of Friends, is an anti-militarist, anti-slavery, abstemious and philanthropic Christian denomination that arose in the mid-seventeenth century, whose central principle is belief in the ability of all human beings to access the 'inward light of Christ'.
10. Jean Meslier (1664–1729), French Catholic *abbé*, author of the *Testament*, one of the earliest book-length philosophical defences of atheism and materialism.
11. Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, *Code de la nature, ou Le veritable esprit de ses lois de tout temps négligé ou méconnu*, Stéphanie Roza (tr.) (Montreuil: La Ville Brûle, 2011 [1755]).

12. Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Doutes proposées aux philosophes économistes sur l'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*, Éliane Martin-Haag (ed.) (Toulouse: PUM, 2013 [1768]).
13. The Physiocrats, especially François Quesnay (1694–1774) and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–1781), were a group of Enlightenment-era French economists, whose core belief lay in the central role of agricultural and land development to national wealth.
14. The *Encyclopédistes*, members of the *Société des gens de lettres*, were a group of over 150 writers and public intellectuals who participated in the writing of the *Encyclopédie* (1751–1765) under the direction of Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783).
15. Gérard Conac, Marc Debene, Gérard Teboul (eds.), *La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen de 1789; histoire, analyse et commentaires* (Paris: Economica, 1993).
16. François-Noël ("Gracchus") Babeuf (1760–1797), a French proto-communist revolutionary and journalist at the extreme radical wing of Jacobinism during the French Revolution, executed for his role in the Conspiracy of the Equals.
17. The Conspiracy of the Equals (1796), a failed *coup d'état* against the Directory during the French First Republic (1795–1799) that sought to install an egalitarian republic, hailed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as the first instance of a truly organised communist party.
18. Georges Avenel (1828–1876), French historian, primarily of the French Revolution. Philippe Buonarroti (1761–1837), Italian-French utopian socialist writer and Freemason, participant in and later chronicler of the Conspiracy of the Equals, who served as inspiration for writers as diverse as Mikhail Bakunin and Auguste Blanqui.
19. François-Noël Babeuf, 'Le but de la société est le bonheur commun', *Le tribun du peuple* 28 (1795).
20. Philippe Buonarroti, *History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality*, James Bronterre O'Brien (tr.) (London: H. Hetherington, 1836 [1796]), p. 314.
21. The Directory (November 1795–November 1799) was the governing five-member committee of the French First Republic until it was overthrown and replaced with the Consulate (November 1799–May 1804) by Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup d'état* on 18 Brumaire, Year VIII under the French Republican Calendar.
22. The Carbonari (c. 1800–1831) was a network of clandestine conspiratorial-revolutionary societies in Italy, whose actions catalysed the failed 1820 Revolution in Sicily and Naples, as well as the later *Risorgimento* (1844–1870). Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881), French socialist revolutionary and political philosopher, advocate of revolution not by a mass uprising of the working class but via a transitional dictatorship of an elite cadre of dedicated activists, often cited (usually negatively) as prefiguring Leninism.

23. Wilhelm Weitling (1808–1871), German tailor and communist political theorist with Christian inflections, founder of the League of the Just (1836–1847), later the Communist League (1847–1852), the precursor of later European socialist and communist parties.
24. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Faust's Tragedy—Study".
25. Friedrich von Schiller, *William Tell*, Theodore Martin (tr.) (New York, NY: Hinds & Noble, 1898), Act II Scene II.
26. Max Stirner, pseudonym of Johann Caspar Schmidt (1806–1856), German schoolteacher, journalist, translator, Young Hegelian philosopher, and prominent advocate of individualist anarchism, especially in *The Ego and its Own* (1845). See present volume, p. 258ff.

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CHAPTER 5

The Significance of Theories of Value for Scientific Socialism

Ricardo's theory of value—Marx's theory of value and its role in Marx's theory of society—Marx on the utopian construction of Ricardo's formula—Utopian interpretation and natural right—The so-called right to the entire product of labour—Marx and the right of surplus value—Surplus value and exploitation—Surplus value and class struggle.

The derivation of socialism from natural-rights considerations is closely connected with the derivation of socialism from the labour theory of value, that is, from the theory of value that was formulated by Ricardo and further developed by Marx.[1] In his theory of value, David Ricardo starts out from the value of the commodities that are traded on the market and do not have a scarcity monopoly, but can be reproduced comparatively—since here too there are limits—at will. The market value [*Marktwert*] or exchange value [*Tauschwert*] of these commodities, he proves, consists in the human labour required to manufacture them, measured according to the time that was devoted to this labour. This finding is the significant element in Ricardo's theory of value. Even it did not emerge from his head completely new. One can already find passages that express approximately this idea in precursors of Ricardo in the seventeenth century. But Ricardo was the first to formulate it with truly classical clarity. There are two kinds of value, he finds: the use value [*Gebrauchswert*] or utility value [*Nützlichkeitswert*], and the exchange value or market value of a

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commodity. Utility is the precondition of exchange value, but does not determine it. So far as commodities can be produced at will, the expenditure of labour is determinant for its exchange value, whereby competition on the market brings about equilibrium. Self-evidently, not all labour is the same. Qualified labour is made up of various components of simple labour. Further, not all labour is equally value-forming. Labour must stand at the technological highpoint of general productive development.

Now with Ricardo, whose *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* appeared in 1817, this theory of value turns its point against *landed property*, specifically against the claims of landowners to particular *ground rent* [*Bodenrente*]. The work appeared at a time when England levied very high corn tariffs, and where the struggle was about whether they should continue or even be raised. The complete abolition of corn tariffs was then barely thought of. In this struggle, Ricardo challenged the claim to ground rent by demonstrating that this was not a constituent element of value, but rather a deduction from the value that is given to the owner of landed property, whereas a natural-rights claim to ground rent did not exist at all. The struggle between landowners and capitalist businessmen, which had a great significance in the first part of the nineteenth century, was the conscious or unconscious motivation that prompted Ricardo to construct his theory.

But matters did not rest there. Ricardo's theory was soon turned against business-owners in general, against industrial capitalists as well. A dispute began about the definition of the concept of "labour". Ricardo includes in the concept the activity of business-owners, of wage-labourers, and of employees, so that with him the value is not actually determined by the work of the wage-labourer, the physical and intellectual worker, but rather is the product of this work together with the business-owner's profit. But very soon, socialists turned this point against Ricardo as a defender of the capitalists. They said: no, labour alone is determinant for value, the labour of those who actually labour, not the claimed entitlement of the capitalist. The owner's profit is also only a deduction from labour value.

In this line of argument—and this is very interesting—many see the great work of Karl Marx. If one asks around by which significant insight Karl Marx has enriched the science of economics, one will hear from most people that it is precisely this theory of value, that expended labour alone determines the value of commodities. Here it goes with Marx just as with almost every great path-breaking thinker. Something is declared to be his work that he already came upon ready-made when he began his work. If

one asks, e.g., a number of people about the work of Kant, nine-tenths of them will answer that he formulated the theory of the thing-in-itself, that is, a theory that in fact existed in philosophy already over 2000 years before Kant was born. Rather, he *restricted* the conclusions that one had drawn from the thing-in-itself, that is his great work; but not that he himself first came up with the idea. And Marx's work consists of having greatly deepened the deductions from the idea of labour value, and having fruitfully used them for further purposes of enquiry. What Marx set himself as his task in his great work *Capital* was not the proof that the products of labour belong to the workers, because labour determines the value of a commodity, but rather the endeavour to recognise, formulate, and establish the great laws of motion of modern capitalist economy. For this, however, he needed the labour theory of value, because for him it is the foundation of his theory of surplus value over and above price—surplus value, over which the struggle between classes takes place in the capitalist economic order. The struggle over surplus value between business-owner and landowner, the struggle over surplus value between worker and business-owner—the wage struggle—the struggle over surplus value by business-owners among one another in free competition, these are the great driving forces that have the very greatest influence on the development of economies in the most various respects.

The dispute over the surplus value that lies in ground rent is not a purely theoretical game, but the manifestation of the struggle over the determination of almost the entirety of agrarian legislation, including tariff legislation regarding agrarian products. Meanwhile, it is the struggle over surplus value in free economic competition that leads to the situation that, if pressure on wages is not possible, the technical mode of manufacturing is perfected ever more to cheapen production. It leads to the further case that the business-owner, in order to beat others off the field, sees themselves required to grow their enterprise ever more, so that a relatively smaller share of the costs goes on wages, and a relatively greater surplus value remains. But the struggle of owner and workers themselves also plays out over this, and as such it intensifies in various directions. Thus the struggle over surplus value in capitalist society is in a certain way ultimately the decisive driving-force of all great economic movements, behind which, provoked by them, stand the great political struggles, the class struggles.

The turning of the labour theory of value against Ricardo and the entirety of bourgeois economics already starts in England in 1821. Marx himself cites a small anonymous work that appeared that year, whose title

is something like: *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties: A Letter to Lord John Russell*.[2] It was hence authored 26 years before Marx wrote his first economic treatise, the polemical work *The Poverty of Philosophy*, which was directed against Proudhon, and 45 years before his *Capital*.[3] In this work, and this is rather interesting, it reads:

> Whatever may be *due* to the capitalist, he can *only receive* the *surplus* labour [Ed. B.—here already we have this concept] of the labourer; for the labourer *must live*. … If capital does not decrease in value as it increases in amount, the capitalists will exact from the labourers the produce of every hour's labour beyond what it is *possible* for the labourer to subsist on.[4]

Here we also have the idea of the theory of the iron law of wages that Lassalle put at the heart of his agitation, which was for many long years held up by the German workers' movement as something akin to article of faith.[5] The 1820s and 1830s are, after all, the heyday and also the intellectual zenith of socialism in England. This yielded an extraordinarily interesting socialist literature, socialist writings by Robert Owen himself, by William Thompson, John Gray, T. R. Edmonds, J. F. Bray, and a whole further series of authors from the school of Robert Owen.[6] They are all based on the same idea: The worker does not receive the full product of their labour, labour and not the labour wage determines the value of the commodity, as a result of which the worker has a claim to the full value of their product.

Karl Marx had already made a start on his great work about political economy in 1849, but only set about publishing it in 1859. It was supposed to appear in instalments, or rather volumes. But only the first volume appeared at the time, namely the work *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and in it the relationship between the labour wage and labour value is not yet dealt with more closely at all.

It is incidentally a remarkable coincidence that this book by Marx, in the foreword to which he develops the fundamental ideas of his theory of history, which we know as a sociological or social-scientific theory of development, came out in the same year that the first path-breaking book by Charles Darwin appeared: *The Origin of Species*, which was foundational for the biological theory of development, the science of the metamorphosis of living creatures. If Darwin's propositions have today also in many points been overturned, then the fundamental idea of this theory has still been retained; he remains the father of the biological theory of

development. And likewise with Marx. What the struggle for existence in nature is for the emergence and development of species in Darwin, the struggle between classes in society is for the development of human societies in Marx. Both theories are fundamentally theories of development resting on struggle.

In the book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, one finds by Marx at one point, where he engages with the attacks at the time on Ricardo's theory of value, and formulates the problems that emerge from it, the following passage:

> If the exchange value of a product equals the labour time contained in the product, then the exchange value of a working day is equal to the product it yields, in other words, wages must be equal to the product of labour. But in fact the opposite is true.[7]

And to this Marx adds the footnote:

> This objection, which was advanced against Ricardo by bourgeois economists, was later taken up by socialists. Assuming that the formula was theoretically sound, they alleged that practice stood in conflict with the theory and demanded that bourgeois society should draw the practical conclusions supposedly arising from its theoretical principles. In this way at least English socialists turned Ricardo's formula of exchange value against political [Ed. B.—bourgeois] economy.[8]

Marx then further at this point calls this derivation of socialism from Ricardo the utopian interpretation of Ricardo's formula—and to think that some believed that this was the great work of Marx! An interpretation that precisely he described as utopian! But it continues throughout the entire socialist literature of the nineteenth century. It culminates, as has already been indicated here, in the demand for a right to the entire product of labour. The question of this right has similarly spawned a whole literature. Among others, Anton Menger, the late, highly erudite Austrian socialist, dealt with it in detail.[9] But another also took up this idea, and that was Ferdinand Lassalle, who seemingly made it the crucial element in his socialist agitation. In Proudhon too we find it addressed in his first great socialist writings, which provoked the greatest sensation. His first socialist work was called *What is Property?*, and in it he formulated the well-known paradox "property is theft". And how does he prove this

statement? He relies on the fact that property makes it possible to reduce the product of labour for the worker, to withhold a great share of it from them in their wages. And so he bases his socialist theory of the right to the entire product of labour on Ricardo's law of value. The same is the case with Karl Rodbertus, the famous German more conservatively-inclined national economist.[10] He too appeals for his socialist theory to Ricardo's law of value, and Ferdinand Lassalle does likewise in his agitatory writings. Ferdinand Lassalle here ultimately goes back to natural right, and justifies socialism on a natural-rights basis. He thereby finds himself without knowing it on the same ground as Proudhon. Indeed, Lassalle's significant, highly interesting scientific main work *The System of Acquired Rights* is in the last analysis also only an intervention in favour of natural right against acquired right, for its main fundamental idea is the application of a statement derived from natural right declaring the human right of the great French Revolution, namely that no generation can bind later generations to its laws, to public as well as private right.

Marx does something quite different. He developed the theory of value that he found in Ricardo further systematically, but not in order to derive rights claims from the theory of surplus value, but rather to more clearly grasp and represent the laws of motion of the capitalist economy. That differentiates him from almost all other socialists who have drawn on Ricardo, and not least from Rodbertus and Lassalle.

Already in his work *On the Recognition of our Political-Economic Conditions*, which appeared in 1842, and later in his *Social Letters*, Rodbertus builds on Ricardo's theory of value, and interprets it entirely in the natural-rights conception of the French and English socialists, so that the worker is already deprived of something that is rightfully due to him by virtue of the fact that he receives a wage instead of the full product.[11] Lassalle places this idea at the heart of his *Open Response to the Central Committee for the Summoning of a General German Workers' Congress*, which appeared in 1863, and develops it a year later in great detail in his polemic: *Herr Bastiat-Schulze von Delitzsch, the Economic Julian*.[12] He stands there completely on the shoulders of Ricardo and supposedly also on the shoulders of Marx. Already in his letter of 12 May 1851 to Marx he calls him "Ricardo become a socialist", and in the same letter he says: "Ricardo is our immediate father!", and praises the definition of ground rent that Ricardo has given as the "mightiest communist deed".[13] For him, who was above all a legal theorist, it lay quite especially close to his heart to derive socialism juristically from the theory of surplus value. In his

agitation, this derivation served him by supporting the wage law of Ricardo, which he described as iron [*ehern*], whereby the worker's wage never rises much above their necessary living requirements, and can never for a long time remain significantly below them—incidentally, a deduction that is more Malthusian than economistic. But, following him, the agitators of both strands of German Social Democracy, the specific Lassalleans as well as the socialists of the Eisenacher tendency of Bebel and Liebknecht, then appeal to it for decades, despite otherwise turning against Lassalle's means, which amounted to removing surplus labour through the creation of workers' producer cooperatives with state credit.[14] This idea of producer cooperatives likewise stemmed from the English socialists. In the 1850s in England, great attempts at it were made with a comparatively fairly significant capital outlay. Well-meaning Christian socialists in England gave over a million marks for producer cooperatives. But these creations either collapsed or changed in character and became capitalist enterprises. In Germany, one was not more precisely informed about this, and when in 1875 the two socialist parties unified, there was found in the draft of the programme for the new party as an addendum to the demand to "destroy the iron law of wages" the passage:

> The emancipation of the working class demands the transformation of the instruments of labour into the common property of society and the co-operative control of the total labour, with application of the product of labour to the common good, and just distribution of the same.[15]

Just as Marx criticised the entire draft extremely disparagingly in a letter to August Bebel and his comrades, so too specifically this passage about the just distribution of the labour product, which in his opinion did not mean anything. He described the derivation from the iron law of wages as utopian. About the demand for just distribution he says:

> What is "fair" distribution? Do not the bourgeois assert that present-day distribution is "fair"? *And is it not, in fact, the only "fair" distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production?* Are economic relations regulated by legal concepts or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise from economic ones?[16]

This is not the place to talk in more detail about the latter, the fundamental idea of the economistic conception of history. But it is in its spirit

that Marx polemicises harshly against the proposal to include the slogan of just distribution of labour product in the programme for agitatory purposes. He argues that the form in which the labour product is distributed is determined by the respective mode of production, and on the basis [*Boden*] of this respective mode of production it would then be, regarded economically, just. Whether the *level* of wages is also just is something else; but that the worker receives a wage and not the product of their labour, that conforms to the given mode of production, and on the grounds of this mode of production nothing substantial could be changed about it. Further, Marx outlines what contradictions lie in the demand for the full labour product. He explains that the equal right in the distribution of labour product in relation to effort [*Leistung*] can be equally wrong in its content, since labour efforts [*Arbeitsleistungen*] are different after all. If the worker receives the full product of their labour, then they would receive something unequal compared to other workers, because they work unequally, and so an equal right would here become a right of inequality. He says:

> Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development which this determines.[17]

And he reproaches the programme in the harshest way for expressing ideas that were once prevalent and therefore made a certain degree of sense, but which in the face of newly-won insight belong to antiquated rhetorical clobber. The letter is uncommonly interesting, but it was only little taken into consideration at that time in the ultimate formulation of the social-democratic programme. Without naming him by name, it is substantially directed at Wilhelm Liebknecht, the deserved standard-bearer of Social Democracy, who for many long years counted in Germany as the appointed interpreter of Karl Marx. But in the theoretical domain he was not this at all. Rather, he was substantially a natural-rights socialist in the vein of the French, and hence had penetrated little into the meaning of Marx's theory. The letter, which, as I have said, had only little effect on the shaping of the then-agreed programme for Social Democracy was forgotten about until in 1890, once Social Democracy stood anew before the task of crafting a programme, Friedrich Engels published it with all its asperities in the *Neue Zeit*.

But the question that is at stake here remained a controversial question within socialism. And in fact not so much a dispute over surplus value and

the like, since that was after all a provable fact. That the worker in general must produce [*erarbeiten*] a higher value than they receive in wages can be proved very easily. If one wants to illustrate this tangibly to oneself today, one should read the statistics of the shareholders [*Aktionäre*]. The shareholders are actually the metamorphosed [*herumwandelnd*] form of surplus value, whether they have a social-rights claim to it or not. How one judges shareholders, i.e., the people who invest their money in the shares of commercial enterprises, in social-rights terms, whether one has to look at them derogatorily as parasites or whether one can say that from time to time they have been a great necessity and even today are not yet dispensable, that is a question unto itself. To illuminate it a small episode shall be mentioned here. The German Reichstag was debating in 1906 about the financial improvements worked out by the then-Reich Treasury Secretary. It proposed for the first time a Reich inheritance tax, and the Social-Democratic Party, of which I am a member, had, because it opposed all indirect taxes and tariffs, demanded higher rates for the inheritance tax than the minister. The task of speaking for this demand fell to me, and in doing so I pointed to the fact that then already a distribution of property had started to take place which offered the possibility of raising the operating capital [*Betriebskapitale*] required for the necessary development of large-scale production in a cooperative way, and referred for this to the strong spread of shareholding. The large-scale capitalist had fulfilled a necessary function in procuring the means for expanding production at the time where another form of capital formation did not exist. But that had already partly been overcome, and one could as a result of this already intervene more daringly in taxing large asset wealth and inheritances. Then a National-Liberal deputy from Westphalia answered that all sounded well and good, but it was still wrong, since if little people club together with their means, they would never summon the entrepreneurial spirit and daring courage that was required to embark on such complex ventures as the large-scale capitalists do. Anyone who tries hard to judge objectively and does not let their scientific perspective be blinded by their own partisan perceptions must admit that part of this answer was correct. Namely if one recognises that to the progressive development of the national economy—so long as the state and the general public ensure that their organs do not become swamped in bureaucratism—that to the progress of society belong decisively the further development of production through constant improvement of machinery and ample, far-sighted efforts, one must tell oneself that a part of that answer is true, and the

dispute could only be about: How much of that is still true, and how much is outdated?

We have recently had a congress of German chemists at which a delegate polemicised vigorously against the socialisation of the chemical industry. He pointed to the important, valuable achievements of this industry, which he feared would not be made in the same way under socialisation. I consider that at such a general level to be very exaggerated, but precisely because I am a socialist and strive to recognise the truth, I do not close my eyes to facts but rather seek to examine how much is true in such assertions. Now one cannot dispute that even still in more recent times capitalist enterprise has made significant achievements in various domains as regards valuable modernisations. Precisely socialists may not hide this fact from themselves, because they must make it the task of socialised production to achieve what capitalism has accomplished in production. One example is, among others, the marvellous modernisations in the important domains of not only the extraction but also the processing of coal, the chemical processing of its by-products, the extraction of oils out of the coal, which is a very significant economic question for Germany, which must limit its imports. From all that emerges how right Marx was when he declared it to be misguided to present the form of the distribution of the labour product as decisive in the justification of socialism. Socialism is bound primarily to the further development of production.

Marx, who soon recognised this, hence—as peculiar as this may sound—confronted capital far more objectively, and did far more justice to its historical significance than most socialists before him, and many who wrote at the same time as him. Similarly Friedrich Engels in his polemic against the philosopher of reality Eugen Dühring, who at the time lectured at the University of Berlin, and was removed in 1877 because of his attacks on colleagues, which certainly went well beyond what was permitted, but can be explained by the fact that the man had gone blind.[18] Dühring was simultaneously a natural-rights socialist and fundamentally a non-economist. Now, the critique that Friedrich Engels levels at him in his work *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* does injustice to him here and there—Engels struck back strongly against the unjust assaults that Dühring had directed against Marx and other socialists—but for all that the book is indisputably the most significant work of modern socialism after Marx's *Capital*. In it, we find now a series of chapters that are also important for our object, because Engels here holds a thorough reckoning with the natural-rights doctrine. Further, it was followed by a

polemic that clarifies the importance of the theory of surplus value for socialism.

Engels remarks in the work that only through Marx's disclosure of surplus value did socialism become a science. This called to the stage the Austrian scholar Anton Menger, at the time a professor at the University of Vienna. In his book *The Right to the Full Labour Product*, which appeared in 1886, he takes up his stance against Marx and Engels, and seeks to prove that Engels reclaimed for Marx and others for Rodbertus a discovery that had been made long before them by English and French socialists. Menger provides the entire literature for this, and one finds in him also very interesting analyses of the natural-rights conception of socialism. But, because he himself is substantively a juristic socialist, as he was called in a polemic, Menger has completely misrecognised the problem that is at stake in the theory of surplus value. He relates it to the question of the right to the full product of labour, something that Marx was not at all concerned with in *Capital*. Why he was not, Engels outlines now in the preface to the German edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy*, a polemic by Karl Marx against Proudhon. There, he mentions the reproach levelled by Rodbertus against Marx that he only provided the proof of surplus value after him, shows how already in that work targeting Proudhon, which first appeared in 1847, Marx addresses this derivation of surplus value from Ricardo, and in 1859 portrays as wrong-headed the application by the English socialists from it that the entirety of societal production belongs to the workers as sole producers, and then says:

> The above application of the Ricardian theory that the entire social product belongs to the workers as their product, because they are the sole real producers, leads directly to communism. But, as Marx indeed indicates in the above-quoted passage, it is incorrect in formal economic terms, for it is simply an application of morality to economics. According to the laws of bourgeois economics, the greatest part of the product does not belong to the workers who have produced it. If we now say: that is unjust, that ought not to be so, then that has nothing immediately to do with economics. We are merely saying that this economic fact is in contradiction to our sense of morality. Marx, therefore, never based his communist demands upon this, but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever growing degree; he says only that surplus value consists of unpaid labour, which is a simple fact.[19]

Then Engels continues:

> But what in economic terms may be formally incorrect, may all the same be correct from the point of view of world history. If mass moral consciousness declares an economic fact to be unjust, as it did at one time in the case of slavery and statute labour, that is proof that the fact itself has outlived its day, that other economic facts have made their appearance due to which the former has become unbearable and untenable. Therefore, a very true economic content may be concealed behind the formal economic incorrectness.[20]

So Engels says expressly that the application of morality—and natural right is morality—to economics in this question is economically wrong, it is no concern of economics what ethical consciousness says. He only recognises that, if the ethical consciousness of the masses declares an economic fact to be unjust, this is an indication that in the meantime conditions have set in according to which this fact is no longer tolerable and tenable. But that must still always first be ascertained, and how does one argue this? Engels shows how when he says:

> Marx, therefore, never based his communist demands upon this, but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever growing degree.

Engels wrote this in 1877 [*M. O.—in fact 1884*], and at least up to the outbreak of the world war the capitalist mode of production had not collapsed, but had on the contrary experienced a monumental further upsurge. Various facts can be provided from which emerges that a series of inferences that one drew from the old theory did not turn out to be true. So, e.g., the statement "the machine strikes the worker dead". The view that the machine will make workers superfluous to a greater degree than are attracted to production by it, is confronted by the fact that until the war the number of industrial workers, of the industrial proletariat, in all modern developed countries has substantially increased, not only in the new countries but also in the old ones. This question thus requires likewise further verification and close examination. But quite particularly the statement by Engels that Marx founded his communist demands on the collapse of the capitalist mode of production, which will necessarily take place, makes it necessary to examine more closely how this collapse is going.

In the meantime, the question of the distribution of the product of labour lies in another domain. The history of the remuneration of workers evinces quite different wage rates, not merely in their absolute level, but also according to the share of the product. At certain times, it registered at a significant low point in development a terrible exploitation of workers. We know of the misery that existed for a long time in England and Germany, and in many ways still exists or exists again, that often wages lag quite significantly behind surplus value. But there is also no shortage of examples for a different relationship between wages and surplus value. In general, in the Marxist literature, the rate of surplus value is also called the rate of exploitation [*Ausbeutungsrate*]. But at a certain point, Engels polemicises against conceiving of the concept "exploitation" morally in this context, it should only be taken economically as a pure fact, just as one might speak of the exploitation of a mine or of a patent. However, I must say that then the word is still used a little unjustly. Exploitation can naturally be a purely economic fact without any connection with moral associations. But if we speak of exploitation with regard to humans, we can barely ever separate the moral sense of the word from it, and that in the wage relation often a true exploitation in the moral sense of the word takes place cannot be disputed at all. The perception that the entire wage system is an exploitative system in the moral sense of the word has undoubtedly given the working class a great moral and ethical motivating drive in its struggle for emancipation. In the political struggles of the workers' movement, everywhere the demand: abolition of the wage system, and specifically seen from the workers' side: abolition of the wage system in order to secure the full product of labour, has played a great role. But of course only as an idea. For how should it be realised for the entirety of the workers as a whole? This could only happen by transitioning to communism, and undertaking no payment for work at all, but rather a simple distribution of wealth, or, as Kropotkin wants it, places the use of the entire societal wealth at the free disposal of all. So long as one still counts on the production value [*Leistungswert*] of labour, and in the transitional stage one will surely not be able to avoid this, a kind of wage system will all the same still also have to be maintained, and the demand: abolition of the wage system has then also been given an entirely different application in practice. Not the form of labour wage is what is fought against in reality. The working class has in practice adopted quite a different position towards it. Against nothing have the workers turned for good reasons more sharply than against a different kind of payment than via wages,

against an equivalisation of labour that might consist in the allocation of vital provisions, housing, etc. They regard a relationship resting on this as slavery or bondage, but the wage they regard as an advance compared to this old-fashioned patriarchal payment-in-lieu for labour, which still existed among butchers, petty traders, and a few other craftsmen. In its practical struggles it was never about fundamentally abolishing the wage form in general, but firstly every time about the wage level in general, and secondly about the way in which the wage level is determined. That, for the time being, is the actual struggle of the working class in modern society, and also towards the state, in respect of the compensation for labour—that the wage is not determined through free competition, is not arbitrarily set by the business-owner, but rather that the working class itself in its organisations acquires a legal status and exercises co-effective influence on wage determination. That is where development is headed next. There is barely any talk there anymore about a natural right to the entirety of surplus value.

But where the interpretation of the meaning of the Marxian theory of value itself is concerned, the circumstance that in Germany one considered Wilhelm Liebknecht, the very outstanding and deserved leader of Social Democracy, to be the student and interpreter of Marx, whereas his exegeses were in fact criticised extremely stridently by Marx, has its equivalent in other countries. Regarding the French socialists, we know that Marx with reference to his own son-in-law, the incidentally very imaginative Paul Lafargue, who was seen in France as the most orthodox of Marxists, once said: "As far as I am concerned, all I know is that I am not a Marxist"—which is supposed to mean, not a Marxist in such a sense.[21] The same scene played out in England, where the intellectual leader of the Marxist wing of the socialists there, H. M. Hyndman, was already judged by Marx in a similar way.[22] Since Hyndman behaved very doctrinairely and, as Engels reproached him, made Marxism into a sectarian dogma, this became the occasion for socialists with different views, like the Fabians, prompted by this false interpretation of the Marxian theory of value, to adopt a different theory of value, the marginal utility theory, which on the Continent is mainly elaborated by outstanding Austrian economists such as Böhm-Bawerk, Wieser, Carl Menger, and also found its defenders in Germany.[23] In England it had as its scientific elaborator William Stanley Jevons, who was famed as a mathematical logician.[24] The Fabians took up this theory, misrecognising or not sufficiently considering the fact that in economics, the concept of "value" does not express a simple quality at all, but rather encompasses several elements. Marx in his day described

exchange value and use value as its fundamental elements. Later, one generally replaced use value with utility [*Nutzwert*]. But in the concept of utility there are again two elements: the immediate individual utility, and the social utility, which encompasses the relative quantity of inclination to buy for the commodity. This utility is what marginal utility theory has in mind. I will not go further into the dispute between its socialist adherents and the champions of the Marxian theory of value, but I will just mention one thing here. Although Marx takes into account utility or use value, and calls it the fundamental condition of value, he leaves it initially out of consideration in his further enquiries about the determination of value. That leads him to noteworthy conclusions, which however are one-sided in nature. More precisely, his theory of value was formulated in such a way that value is determined by the labour that is embedded in the commodity, measured by the labour time *socially necessary* [*gesellschaftlich notwendig*] for its manufacture. In the concept of socially necessary labour time, two further elements are included: firstly, the labour time that is socially necessary to manufacture every individual example of the commodities in question, that is, socially necessary according to the highest level of *technology* attained. But it also depends on what labour time is socially necessary to manufacture the commodity in the amount required to satisfy the buyers that exist for it. The level of consumption is determined in modern society not by how many people need a commodity, but how many are able to buy it and inclined to buy it. If one confuses both of these moments, then one definition cancels out the other, and then we come after all to marginal utility theory. So much about this.

What is called exploitation in the Marxian theory is the surplus value that, of the value of the commodity converted into price minus the material costs of production, does not accrue to the worker. I cannot say accrues to the capitalist, since it is divided in rent for the landowner, profit for the business-owner, and interest for the financial capitalist. But now is there an exploitative relationship in the fact that the worker does not receive the full product of their labour? We have seen that in the objective sense one can use the word exploitation, but that, if one interprets it morally, as is the case with many socialists, one reaches completely wrong conclusions. According to this, namely, in highly-developed industries, where the workers are paid the best and in general occupy socially the highest status, exploitation would be the highest, because there so-called constant capital is invested the most in the business enterprise, and in such industries where the workers are very poorly paid, because few machines are used,

exploitation would seem to be less high. Thus the equivalisation of the concepts of the rate of surplus value and the rate of exploitation awakens a thoroughly false impression.

How little Marx derives socialism from the fact that the worker does not receive the full product of their labour also emerges from the fact that precisely he establishes that this was already the case before the capitalist period. In chapter 8 of volume I of *Capital*, he explicitly writes: "Capital has not invented surplus labour".[25] And in fact it is even a good deal lower under capital than in branches of the pre-capitalist economy. Rather, Marx derives the demand for socialism from the collapse of the capitalist mode of production, which will take place of necessity. Now this collapse can be conceptualised in different ways. It can be conceived as a purely economic phenomenon of the form that the economic crises that are indivisibly associated with this mode of production become ever larger, until ultimately so great a crisis takes place that following it a complete collapse comes about. I will remark explicitly that here it is not a matter of crises that are brought about by external events, wars, etc.—since these are no purely economic phenomena—but rather ones that are brought about by the competitive struggles of the capitalist world, which are immanent in the economic mode of capitalist production. But this collapse can also be conceived as a result of the class struggles that take place in the domain of capitalist society as an unavoidable effect of its inherent class contradictions, which it increasingly exacerbates. According to the theory of Marx, these class struggles appear on an ever greater scale, and that requires us to examine the nature of capitalist society in general, and beyond that to ascertain the nature of its class struggles.

Notes

1. David Ricardo (1772–1823), English political economist, one of the main thinkers of the classical school of thought, author of an early labour theory of value as well as various economic axioms on rent, wages, and profits.
2. Charles Wentworth Dilke, *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties, deduced from Principles of Political Economy, in a Letter to Lord John Russell* (London, 1821).
3. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), French mutualist political philosopher and federalist politician, advocate of cooperative workers' associations and peaceful social revolution, 'father of anarchism' whose vigorous theo-

retical disputes with Marx contributed to the demise of the International Workingmen's Association.

4. Dilke, *Source and Remedy*.
5. Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864), Prussian jurist, philosopher, and socialist activist, advocated state socialism in conjunction with state-financed producer cooperatives, in 1863 founder of the first European social-democratic party, the General German Workers' Association [*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*].
6. John Francis Bray (1809–1897), English-American economist, radical Chartist and socialist activist, early advocate of market socialism as well as labour exchanges. Thomas Rowe Edmonds (1803–1889), English political economist and actuary, Ricardian socialist and supporter of the cooperative movement, prefigured Marxian theories of surplus labour and wages as well as the replacement of capitalism by a later social stage. John Gray (1799–1883), English newspaper owner and economist, favourable to Owenite ideas but more strongly influenced by Ricardian socialism, one of the earliest supports of central planning. William Thompson (1775–1833), Irish political philosopher and social reformer, an early radical critic of capitalism with a lasting influence on Chartism, the cooperative and trade union movements, and Karl Marx's political-economic thought.
7. Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Part One', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 29: Marx 1857–61* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 301.
8. Ibid.
9. Anton Menger von Wolfensgrün (1841–1906), Austrian jurist and social theorist, avid specialist collector of socialist literature, sought to offer a juridical basis for socialist thought.
10. Johann Karl Rodbertus-Jagetzow (1805–1875), German economist and politician, prominent theorist of state socialism, defender of a rival labour theory of value to Karl Marx, and advocate of a gradualist route to socialism.
11. Karl Rodbertus, *Zur Erkenntnis unserer staatswirtschaftlichen Zustände* (Neubrandenburg: G. Barnewitz, 1842); Karl Rodbertus, *Soziale Briefe* (Berlin: Friedrich Gerhard, 1850–1851).
12. Ferdinand Lassalle, *Herr Bastiat–Schulze von Delitzsch, der ökonomische Julian, oder Kapital und Arbeit* (Berlin: Reinhold Schlingmann, 1864); Ferdinand Lassalle, *Offenes Antwortschreiben an das Zentralkomitee zur Berufung eines Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeiter-Kongresses zu Leipzig* (Zürich: Meyer and Zeller, 1863).
13. See David McLellan (ed.), *Marx's Grundrisse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980), p. 5.
14. Ferdinand August Bebel (1840–1913), German socialist politician and publicist, long-serving Reichstag member in the North German

Confederation and German Reich (1867–1881, 1883–1913), in 1869 co-founder of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party [*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*], later (1892–1913) co-leader of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany [*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*]. Wilhelm Philipp Martin Christian Ludwig Liebknecht (1826–1900), German radical-democratic revolutionary, close ally of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Communist League and later responsible for popularising Marxism within the German socialist movement, alongside Bebel co-founder of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party.

15. Thomas Kirkup, *A History of Socialism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1892), p. 290.
16. Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–83* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 84.
17. Ibid., p. 87.
18. Eugen Karl Dühring (1833–1921), German positivist philosopher and political economist, originator of a briefly popular anti-Marxist tendency within German socialism as well as pseudoscientific theories of racial antisemitism, now best known as the object of Friedrich Engels' critique in *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (1878).
19. Friedrich Engels, 'Marx and Rodbertus: Preface to the First German Edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy* by Karl Marx', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 26: Engels 1882–89* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 281–2.
20. Ibid., p. 282.
21. Paul Lafargue (1842–1911), French doctor and revolutionary socialist, in 1882 alongside Jules Guesde co-founder of the Marxist French Workers' Party [*Parti Ouvrier Français*], husband of Laura Marx, and contributor to Eduard Bernstein's series *The History of Socialism in Individual Depictions.*
22. Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842–1921), English writer and politician influenced by Marx's early writings, in 1881 founder of the Social Democratic Federation, the first British left-wing political party, espousing an eclectic programme of universal suffrage and nationalisation alongside chauvinism and antisemitism.
23. Fabian Society (1884–), a British political organisation advocating the achievement of democratic socialism by gradualist and reformist means. Eugen Böhm Ritter von Bawerk (1851–1914), Austrian economist, politician, and diplomat, made significant contributions to theories of capital, supporter of the gold standard and balanced budgets, originator of extensive and influential critiques of Marxism. Carl Menger (1840–1921), Austrian economist and founder of the 'Austrian School', major contribu-

tor to the rise of marginalism within theories of value and prices. Friedrich von Wieser (1851–1926), Austrian political economist, main representative of neoclassical marginal utility theory, defended the role of entrepreneurship in bringing about economic change, unlike most other Austrian School economists viewed classical liberalism as insufficient to guarantee social order.

24. William Stanley Jevons (1835–1882), English economist and logician, founder of mathematical economics, alongside Carl Menger and Léon Walras spearheaded the marginalist revolution within economic thought.
25. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Karl Marx – Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 243.

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CHAPTER 6

The Nature of Society in Advanced Capitalism

The meaning of the concept of capitalism—Its multifarious content and its naïve interpretation—Capitalism as the bearer of progress in production—The concentration of firms and enterprises—The spatial distribution of enterprise classes—Concentration does not prevent the multiplicity of enterprises—The tenacity of the farming enterprises—Class formation and class structure—The rapid increase in the dependent and the slow decrease in the independent—The urbanisation of social life—Skilled and unskilled workers—Income and wealth classes—The un-narrowed bottleneck—The mobility of capital as conserver of the middle classes—The theory of economic crises and the reversal of the spiral—The aftereffects of the war on economic development and its problems.

In order to provide a picture of the nature of society in advanced capitalism, which naturally can only happen in broad outlines, I must take the materials from our German statistics. I could of course also use the ones from various other countries; Marx took them from England, which after all in his day was the most advanced country of capitalist production and economy. But in the meantime, Germany has caught up close behind England, and before the war it had very highly-developed occupational and professional statistics. It also presents in some ways a cleaner picture for examination, because the English economy was strongly influenced by its enormous colonial empire, whereas in the years we are concerned with

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here, Germany's colonial possessions were only in their beginnings, and exercised a very slight influence on the shape of its economy. But if we speak of the capitalist economy, then we must clarify—which regrettably does not happen today in the way that it should—that in the concept of "capitalism" very different substantive contents are included, that the term "capitalism", which is so easily tossed about today, as if it expressed quite a simple matter that could one day be removed, encompasses very many things. To come to the main point, the concept "capitalist" first and foremost describes the fact of a certain level of production, the consolidation of labour in large enterprises, the application of machineries, etc., which is only possible through great expenditure of capital. So the concept "capitalist" is firstly the expression for a certain *form of production*. But capitalism is also something else; it is also a *system of distribution*, a system for distributing precisely the outcomes of production under the control of capital, which is a completely different system of distribution than we can find at earlier stages of production, in feudalism, in manual crafts, etc. But the concept does not only include a system of distribution and a certain form of production, but thirdly also a certain system of commercial *law* [*Wirtschaftsrecht*]. The legal relationship of business-owner and worker is under capital a completely different one than earlier under feudalism and manual craftsmanship.

Even in socialist circles one frequently forgets this composite nature of capitalism. Where that leads to, I want to show by means of an example from recent times. These days somewhere in a highly-regarded paper, there was an article in which the author said:

> It is the tragedy of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany that, although it fundamentally fights against capitalism and wants to remove it, it is required by its position in the government first to reconstruct capitalist production.

Now, I was asked in a large gathering what I have to say about this tragedy. I did not get around to answering this question there, because the meeting had to be suspended as a result of noisy disturbances. If I had had the time to answer, I would have said, and *privatim* I also afterwards gave this answer to the questioner: I see no tragedy whatsoever in this fact, but at most in the intellectual preconceptions of the article's author. Certainly, it is undeniably the task of the government, whatever it may be, in modern countries, above all in Germany in its unique world situation, where it is compelled to carry out certain tremendous efforts, so far as one cannot

immediately in one fell swoop, as it was tried in Russia but did not succeed, to completely change society and cast off all burdens—certainly it is the task of the current government in Germany, whether it is conservative, or liberal, democratic or social-democratic, first of all to get the economy going again and put it in order, and thereby by all means also to preserve capitalist production or secure its vital conditions and possibilities for development. But this is not to say that it must now remain in all points what it was beforehand. One can preserve the form of production, but change the legal relationship. Similarly, one can also change the mode of distribution. In part, the former has also happened in Germany. A great change took place through the law about the works councils, which as yet is in its beginnings, but is extraordinarily significant and of great scope, and at least introduces fundamentally a great transformation in the legal relationship between business-owner and worker. So the form of enterprise or economic form can remain preserved, and still in its constitution and leadership a great, even a revolutionary change can occur. But in capitalism we have as a lasting tendency the increase in the size of enterprises. According to the Marxian theory, development leads of necessity, under the pressure of free competition, to ever greater concentration of enterprises, to accumulation of assets in private hands, along with the proletarianisation of the great majority of the population, and with that to a quite different class stratification and the intensification of class struggles. That is what we have to look at next.

After the foundation of the German Reich, after along with the special sovereignty [*Sonderhoheit*] of the individual states all barriers to the internal market had fallen, and Germany shifted to a trade policy that after a short *interim* period established the system of most-favoured-nation treaties, with the help of which Germany's external market expanded more and more, Germany's industry in a relatively short space of time underwent a quite tremendous upsurge, so that in individual parts of Germany we have had developments that recall American conditions. I need only mention the great Rhenish-Westphalian industrial region, which in fact can bear comparison with the great American industrial centres. Before the war, the German Reich had three general occupational and professional censuses. Between the first and the last of these lie 25 years. The first census took place in 1882, the second in 1895, and the third in 1907. Thus, the census of 1907 gives us the most recent comparative figures. Now, where the development of businesses in industry and mining is concerned, the German professional census divided businesses into small,

medium, and large enterprises. Until shortly before the war, those of 1 to 5 persons were counted as small enterprises, those of 6 to 50 as medium enterprises, and everything above that counted in statistics and science as a large enterprise. However, among the workers there predominated a quite different conception. The Berlin metalworkers carried out a census of the members of their profession in 1902, and there they counted among the small enterprises everything that had less than 500 workers, to the medium enterprises they counted those of 500 to 2000 workers, and only above that point did in their view the large enterprises begin. That is in general characteristic of their social mode of estimation. One time, in a gathering of the lathe operators, after I had held a speech there, I stayed for a good while longer to listen in on how they dealt with their own affairs, which is always very instructive. There the chair reported on the inspection of conditions in a company and remarked about it with a tone of reasonable disdain: "You can imagine what kind of huckster's den that was, there were only about 1000 workers employed there!" A business-owner who employs around a thousand workers is usually already a millionaire; but in the view of the metalworkers of Berlin, their business was fundamentally only a small enterprise.

But let us stick to the entries in the Reich statistics. They show in the first period from 1882 to 1895, which lasted 13 years, a lower rise than in the period of only 12 years from 1895 to 1907. That is understandable, and illuminates the entire tendency of this development. So as not to exhaust the reader through too many numbers, I will here only put down the initial and final numbers for the whole period in round terms. According to that, in these twenty-five years in industry and mining the number of small enterprises (1–5 persons) went from 2,175,000 in 1882 to 1,870,000 in 1907; the number of medium enterprises from 85,000 in 1882 to 157,000 in 1907, and the large enterprises from 9000 in 1882 to 29,000 in 1907. If we take not the numbers of businesses, but of the persons employed in them, then in small enterprises there were around 3,270,000 persons employed in 1882 and 3,202,000 in 1907; in medium enterprises 1,109,000 in 1882 and 2,715,000 in 1907; and in large enterprises 1,554,000 in 1882 and 4,940,000 in 1907. Here one sees how the larger enterprise in industry compared with the smaller ones takes up ever greater space. The small enterprises are in decline, but comparatively little. But the medium enterprises are still quite significantly on the increase. They have risen in number from 85,000 to 157,000, and in the number of people they employ from 1,109,000 to 2,715,000.

If undoubtedly a considerable concentration of business-enterprises has taken place, then this has still not taken place to the extent that one assumed and as it stood in the Erfurt Programme of German Social Democracy, namely that medium-sized enterprises would disappear. They are precisely not disappearing in industry either. All the same, one must not forget that a business-enterprise [*Betrieb*] is not the same as a firm [*Unternehmung*]. One firm often encompasses various businesses, the large firms entire series of businesses, whereas the statistics list these enterprises individually. If we had statistics about firms, then we would be able to establish a substantially stronger concentration than appears in the figures above. In relation to industry, the theory was undeniably right insofar as an increasing concentration of firms takes place. But it did not take place in the form that the medium-sized enterprises and firms disappeared. Only the very small ones, the minute enterprises, have somewhat decreased in number, but otherwise a rise has taken place throughout, from the smaller into the medium, and from the medium into the larger business-enterprises. We would see that even more clearly if we took into consideration the subdivisions of the three large groups compared here. Not one of these divisions disappeared from the ranks. It was simply that a shift upwards took place. However, to a certain degree, some new formations have taken shape *alongside* the general development, in that namely entire new industries came into existence, which from the start came into existence as gigantic firms. One should think here of the great modern locomotive factories and dockyards for steamship construction, of the development of the great electrical works, etc., where entire branches of industry immediately came to life as giant enterprises and did not first have to go through the development from small via medium to large enterprise.

A similar picture emerges in commerce and transport. Here we even have a still stronger increase in number. The small enterprises in commerce increased significantly. After all, commerce is often the refuge for many who have been crowded out of industry, since the establishment of a petty grocer [*Kleinkrämer*] is far easier than that of a small factory-owner. In commerce and transport, the development from 1882 to 1907 was such that the following increases took place: the small enterprises from 676,000 to 1,204,000; the medium enterprises from 26,000 to 76,000; the large enterprises from 463 to 2800. In commerce, the large enterprises, i.e., the enterprises with over 50 people, were not as numerous as in industry. Although we have a very significant increase in the number of modern department stores [*Kaufhäuser*], their number on the whole is

not so overwhelmingly large. Also in commerce there lies behind a comparatively low number of employees often already a very substantial capital outlay. According to the number of those engaged in them, the development from 1882 to 1907 in the small enterprises went from around 1 million to 2 million; in the medium enterprises from 270,000 to 878,000; and in the large enterprises from 54,000 to 395,000. Here the significance of the increased number of large enterprises emerges more clearly. But while in industry and mining the 5 million employed in the large enterprises are as many as those employed in medium and small enterprises put together, their relative situation in commerce is still somewhat different; here they constitute only a sixth of all enterprises.

Nevertheless, one must not forget one explanation for the great proliferation of business enterprises: that is the immense increase in production itself, the tremendous growth in the mass of products. This also explains why besides the great firms in commerce so many of the small ones can maintain themselves. The modern capitalist mode of production uncommonly raises the productivity of labour. The commodity market grows, and hence the small firms find besides the bigger ones always still a context to which they can adjust themselves.

A completely different picture, taking a long-term view, is shown by the development of enterprises in agriculture. This has provided a great disappointment for the original conception, it has downright disproved it. Because in England in agriculture large-scale landownership predominated, one had reasoned for a long time that this lay in the nature of the modern economy, and that, just as in industry, so too in agriculture the small firms would be ever more supplanted by the larger ones. But that has not come about, rather the opposite has happened. In agriculture over these 25 years, large enterprises have declined in number, and only the actual farming enterprises and the very small minuscule enterprises have proliferated. The small parcels of land that are presumably tallied along with the arbour gardens, rose from 2 million to over 3 million. With enterprises of 2 to 5 hectares, this increase amounts to from 980,000 to 1,006,000 in round numbers. Included in these enterprises are also the high-end agricultural enterprises, the ones farmed more like gardens. The medium enterprises from 6 to 20 hectares rose from 926,000 to 1,065,000, and then precisely with the large enterprises of 20 to 100 hectares the decline begins. Their number falls from 282,000 to 262,000, and that of the enterprises of over 100 hectares from 25,000 to 23,000. Thus, here a completely different picture of development shows itself than was assumed.

The farm enterprises are holding their own. That is partly a result of interventions by legislation. It has crafted all manner of laws that have had the effect of keeping farm enterprises competitive. A further explanation is provided by the strong development of cooperatives in agriculture as well as the circumstance that agricultural production, in contrast to industrial production, is substantially organic, depending on natural events. It is hence not as dependent on concentration for the raising of productivity as industrial production. Now, it is notable that with all of this, with this growth of enterprises in agriculture itself, the number of those engaged in it has substantially shrunk over these 25 years. In Germany, the population over this time rose by around 36 percent. By contrast, the number of those employed in agriculture along with their dependents fell from over 19 million to not quite 17,700,000, so that one could almost say that the entire additional growth in the population in this time, which amounted to approximately 25 million people, whooshed past agriculture into industry, and even, instead of ceding a little to agriculture, swept away a further 8 percent of its people. Seen statistically, that is true. In individual cases, that may naturally have been different, but in the overall picture, the agricultural population has declined and despite this, agricultural production has increased. Hence, before the war, Germany's development went ever more strongly towards being an industrialised state.

No less important than the development of business enterprises are the changes in people's professional positions. In industry, the number of the self-employed has gone down, whereas the number of technical and commercial employees [*Angestellte*] has very significantly risen. The number of workers [*Arbeiter*] has also tremendously increased; their multiplication leaves in absolute numbers those of all other occupational *strata* far behind, but in comparative terms the growth in commercial and technical employees was still greater.[1] In industry, their number rose from 99,000 in 1882 to 686,000 in 1907; the number of workers in the same time from 4 million to 8,600,000, while the number of self-employed fell from 1,861,000 to 1,729,000. So employees grew by 592 percent, and workers by 110 percent. In commerce and industry we see a similar picture. Yet there the self-employed have also increased, because after all it is easier to establish oneself in retail [*Kleinhandel*] than in industry; their number grew from 505,000 to 843,000. But those employed in commerce multiplied from 141,000 to 505,000 and the workers in commerce and transport from 727,000 to 1,959,000. Hence, the self-employed rose by 60 percent, the workers by 169 percent, but employees by 257 percent. In

agriculture we find also in this respect again a deviating picture. But the numbers are less suitable for comparison, because in 1907 a different counting method was used than in the two preceding censuses. Here namely the persons who belong to the household and work with its members, while they were counted with the family of the firm, i.e., of the farmer, in the older statistics, in the newer ones they were counted as workers.

The prodigious growth of technical and commercial employees in industry and commerce is the vital illustration of a fact that was first emphasised in Marxian theory with the highest acuity. Before Marx, political economy only distinguished between fixed capital, as one called capital invested in buildings, machinery, etc., and movable, circulating capital. Marx introduced a different distinction: he distinguished between constant and variable capital. Constant he calls all capital that, like the wear and tear of plant facilities and machines, the outlay of raw and excipient materials, etc., is calculated as part of the objective costs of production, and therefore reappears unchanged in the price of the product, whereas the expenditure on human labour—by workers and employees—redounds in an increased form to the value of production as a whole. This he calls variable capital. The individual can lose through false speculation; but in general the fundamental principle applies that in their calculations, the business-owner first and foremost wants to recoup what they have spent on machinery, rent, raw materials, and the like. That this constant capital in industry has increased in relative terms far more strongly than variable capital (wages, etc.), is now illustrated through the comparatively stronger increase in commercial and technical personnel.

Let us come back to the shifts in occupational groups in capitalist society. In agriculture and forestry, we have seen the members of these occupations decline over these 25 years from 19 down to 17½ million. By contrast, in industry and mining the number of those occupied grew from 16 to 26 million, in commerce and transport from 4 to 8 million. But to this also come the members of the free and public professions, which have also experienced a gigantic increase, namely from 1½ to 2.6 million. All of this indicates a very significant shift, a complete alteration in the social character of the population. When the German Reich was founded, far more than half of its population still lived in the countryside and off agriculture as its source of income. But now, agriculture as a professional branch supported an ever smaller part of the population; the mass lived off industry, commerce, and transport, off free and public occupations.

Overall, this signified tremendous cultural progress, which all the same also had its negative side: the turn away from nature and various other damaging effects. Indisputable is only that on the whole, industry represents the higher economic form than agriculture, despite the improvements that have taken place in this as well.

A further significant fact is that, just as the city grows at the cost of the countryside, social life in general becomes ever more *urbanised*, so to speak. That is one of the most characteristic phenomena of the epoch, which incidentally took place in England even more than it did in Germany. The city plays an ever greater role in all of social life, and a great part of what one for a long time called the agrarian question consists in the fact that, whereas in earlier periods the farmer had their own culture and was proud of it, and almost looked down on the city-dweller, they now urbanise their life themselves, want to live like the urbanite, and like them, so too the agricultural worker. Therein lies a great part of the dissatisfaction in the countryside; for if the farmer wanted to live like their forefathers, then there would never have been an agrarian question. The price of products of the soil had risen, but their money income had not suffered in any way.

Among the workers in industry a development is likewise taking place that engrosses our interest. This class has, as we have seen, mightily increased in number. But now within industry one differentiates between two categories of workers, the skilled [*gelernt*], i.e., those who have been trained in a period of apprenticeship, and the so-called unskilled [*ungelernt*] workers. Earlier one said qualified and unqualified workers, i.e., one described the skilled worker as qualified, and the unskilled worker as unqualified. But there is, as a businessman once said very correctly, no such thing as unqualified labour. Even unqualified labour must be carried out properly, and often demands in its own way great strength and also great skilfulness. I do not expect anyone ever to want to take on a wheelbarrow-pusher in their work. Anyone who tried to do so would soon notice that a certain skilfulness belongs to this work too, and not just bodily strength. All the same, the unskilled worker lies socially and economically below the skilled worker, albeit in Germany not quite as strongly as in England. In England, the separation between skilled and unskilled workers before the war was far stronger than in Germany. Hence the phenomenon, which was apparent to many who came to England, that there they found an immense number of the absolute lowest workers, low in the manner of their way of life, low in their way of residing, and low also in

their kinds of clothing. They concluded from this that overall misery in England was far greater than on the Continent. But here it is only a matter of a partial phenomenon, which is explained by the entire history of the English workers. As a result of particular circumstances, in England the unskilled "labourer", in contrast to the skilled "worker", received a far lower wage, only about 60 or even just 50 percent of the skilled wage, whereas in Germany the unskilled worker receives up to 70 or 80 percent of the skilled wage. The number of skilled workers has developed differently in Germany than that of the unskilled. Since 1895, in the professional census, there was a distinction between the two categories, so that we have a comparison for the development of the two for the 12 years from 1895 to 1907. According to that, the number of skilled workers in industry rose from 4 to 5.4 million, but that of the unskilled from 2.3 to 3.9 million, so comparatively the latter have undergone a much stronger increase. In 1895, for every 100 skilled workers there were 55 unskilled; but in 1907 there were as many as 73. The perfected machine has also here frequently required unskilled workers instead of skilled ones. But despite this, and this is the important thing, in this period where the number of unskilled works rose so strongly, the number of skilled workers in industry still increased more strongly than that of the population overall. Over these 12 years, the overall population rose by 19 percent, while the number of skilled workers rose by around 29 percent. This too is characteristic for the vast development towards the industrialised state that has taken place in Germany.

The question is now: Whence came the growth of the number of unskilled workers? It points to a very characteristic phenomenon. In part, German workers moved from the countryside to the city as day-labourers, and were replaced in the countryside by foreigners, i.e., the agrarian German workers went into industry, and from Poland and other countries a great share of workers were brought in for German agriculture, partly as seasonal workers, but partly also as permanent labour forces. The German workers could in this way elevate themselves above the Polish workers, etc., onto a higher level. However, it was also for the Poles a step up in comparison to their lifestyle in their home country. They moved to Germany because there they still received better wages than at home. Given all of this, it remains a noteworthy circumstance that it was partly only off the back of these foreign workers that German industry and the industrial workers could develop so strongly in the time outlined. Without these foreign day-labourers, part of the great upswing would have been

impossible, whose final result was that every *stratum* of workers ultimately lay somewhat higher than before, and the *stratum* of skilled workers increased comparatively more strongly than the population. In relation to this, the phrase from Marx, which is written in *Capital* and was taken literally by many people: "The machine strikes the worker dead", has not come about. For this immense increase of workers in industry we find not just in Germany, but simultaneously also in England, in France, just as in all modern developed countries, and strongest of all in America. That can be explained by a series of reasons that Marx could not have sufficiently taken into account.

Marx had taken his examples from the textile industry, which in his day in England was the decisive industry. But fibre offered far less resistance to its treatment by machinery than leather, wood, metal, etc. While machinery in the textile industry had certainly sidelined parts of the workforce, that did not happen in other industries, but on the contrary, there the workers multiplied tremendously, especially in the metalworking industries, which after all have gradually attained the leading role in the world. This expedited development became possible because it was not just a matter of machinery for the manufacture of objects for personal consumption, but also of the great expansion of means of transport, the railways, steamboats, etc. The enormous densification of the railway network that went ahead in the various countries, above all in the United States, but not least also in Germany, took place in the main only after Marx had written *Capital*. One only needs to compare a railway map from the 1860s, the years in which Marx wrote *Capital*, with a map from 1914, and one can see what colossal development the railways underwent. But the transport machines themselves, locomotives, steamers, etc., have also changed their character, they have grown gigantically, and their growth just like their increase has strongly affected the growth of industry and contributed substantially to the vast industrialisation not only of Germany but of the entire world.

But then we also have something else to point out. The incredible multiplication of societal wealth, which was a consequence of the great perfection of the means of production, the gigantically increased extraction and processing of ores and natural resources, and continuous increases in the productivity of human beings at machinery has secondly had the effect of a great fostering of high-end work in industry. The first effect of machinery was, on the contrary, the depression of the quality of manufactured products, just as Marx also observes. The cheap manufactures crowded

out the better, solid works. But over the further course of development, with the growing wealth of society the market for high-quality industries also rises, which in turn brings about an increasing occupation of skilled high-end workers. These facts, the great growth in societal wealth with its technical aftereffects, now confront us with the question: How does all of this affect the class structure of society?

The first social impact of the machine industry was that it drove back the middle *strata* of the population, increased the proletariat, and that the *stratum* of the wealthy and their wealth grew. So the theory emerged in the socialist world, which was propagated for a long time in agitatory clarificatory addresses—I also took part strongly in these—that over the further course of capitalist development, the middle *strata* would be completely ousted by the small *stratum* of the wealthy, while besides this the proletariat and simultaneously also its dazzlement [*Verblendung*] would tremendously grow. The socialist economist Karl Rodbertus, who in his own way was very significant if also more conservatively inclined, once represented that in a pictorial comparison in such a way that the social pyramid is taking shape in the form of an ever more narrowing bottleneck. I have occasionally tried to visualise that graphically:

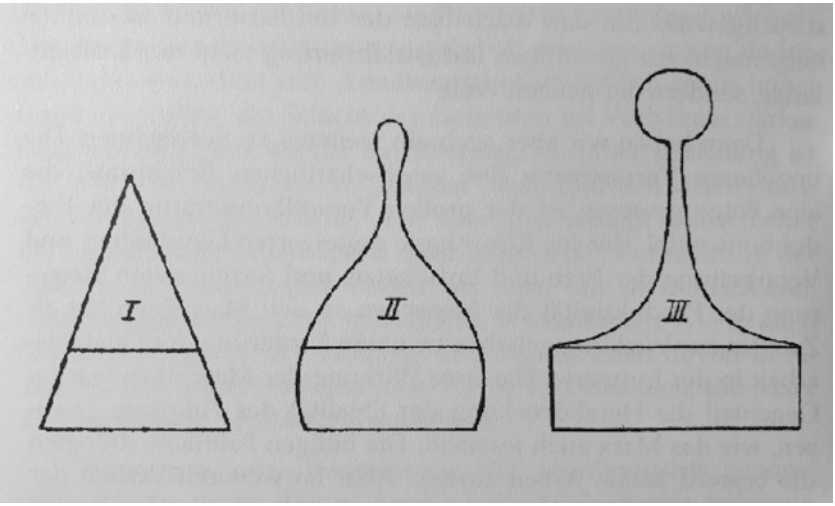

Figure I shows the societal pyramid in its presumed origin; at the bottom, the poorer classes, above them, tapering to an ever narrower point, the property-owning classes. With the rise of capitalist production, a small *stratum* of the extremely rich forms at the top, the middle *strata* dwindle, but the lower *strata* gain in size. The pyramid takes on the shame of Figure II. But gradually it takes on the shape of the bottleneck as in Figure III. The head of the very rich bulges, the middle *stratum* narrows completely, and the *stratum* of the proletariat at the bottom becomes ever larger. It was Professor Julius Wolff who commented ironically on this theory by saying that according to it, society must reach a point where one day the neck disappears entirely, and at the very top only the head is left, and, devoid of any supporting intermediary *stratum*, crashes into the wide base of the bottle below.[2] But the actual development has not taken this route. If we trace the income structure in the various countries, as the statistics show us them, we get a completely different picture. Since for Germany as a whole an income tax has only just been introduced, we must take as comparative figures those from Prussia, which encompasses five-eighths of the German Reich. Prussia fundamentally reformed its income tax in 1892 under the well-known Miquel tax reform.[3] Let us assume that before the war, all those in the census with less than 3000 gold marks in income belonged to the proletariat, and that with 3000 marks of tax-declared income the middle *strata* begin. Then come above them first the *strata* from 3000 to 6000 marks income, then those with 6000 to 10,000 marks, and hereupon those with 10,000 to 30,500 marks. The latter are already good middle-class existences. Those in the census with 30,500 to 100,000 marks declared income we can count as partly well-to-do, partly rich; and those with over 100,000 marks income as the *stratum* of the very rich. I have before me the latest figures for those in the census for 1916 according to the old Miquelian income tax. Now, from 1892 to 1916, so in the epoch of the great upswing of capitalist production, the *stratum* of the extremely rich with over 100,000 marks income rose from 1781 to 3561, so it has more than doubled; the number of the well-to-do and rich rose over the same time from 6700 to 22,000, so it has more than tripled. The number of the well-to-do with an income of 6000–30,500 marks increased from 104,000 to 210,000, so likewise more than doubled. This *stratum* too has increased well beyond the growth in the population. And ultimately, the lower middle *stratum*, which one imagined would be entirely cut out, the class of census-respondents with an income of between 3000 and 6000 marks, even grew from 205,000 to 578,000, so by almost

three times. So no *stratum* out of these income groups is vanishing, on the contrary all the numbers are increasing. Anyone who recalls the development of the cities in recent decades, how the pull towards opulence in the construction of homes and the like made itself ever more strongly noticeable, will also grasp that this would not have been possible at all without the growth of the middle income *strata*.

Not quite the whole picture is revealed if we observe the increase in asset wealth in itself. The wealth tax was *only* levied in Prussia from 1895. My figures go up to 1911. So they only cover a period of 16 years, a period of time in which Prussia's population increased by about 25 percent. The numbers only indicate the taxed wealth, not actual wealth, which is higher after all, because with the tax all manner of possible deductions are made. Now, over this period, the taxed wealth of the groups of 6000–32,000 marks from 767,000 to around 1,200,000; of the group 32,000–100,000 marks increased from 284,000 to 419,000; of the group 100,000–500,000 marks from 87,000 to 136,099; and of the group of over 500,000 marks—the mark always in its value in gold—from 15,600 to around 23,000. So one finds an increase everywhere. The pyramid has not developed in the direction of the bottleneck, but fairly evenly in all *strata*. The proletariat has grown in size very strongly, but the middle *strata* too and likewise the upper *stratum*. The wealth of society has vastly increased, but in this have shared not only the extremely rich, but all the *strata* of property-owners.

If the development as one had imagined it previously, as not only Marx and Rodbertus but also Lassalle and all other socialists had assumed, has not come about, then with that the socialist movement has not yet been shown to be superfluous. What has happened is that the tension between the larger incomes and the incomes of the mass of the people [*Volksmasse*] has significantly grown, and that is what it comes down to. The pyramid of income and wealth is developing not along the lines of the bottleneck, but rather more in the vein of an inverted concertina. Suppose that a concertina is placed on its side and weighted down in such a way that at the bottom it can only rise slowly, while another force pulls it upwards. Then the tension between the weighted mass at the bottom and the upper parts will become ever greater, and we see that in fact in the relationship between the increasing number of the rich and their growing luxury and the army, which as a mass is growing the strongest, of those who stand socially in their service. The increase in workers and lower employees exceeds in absolute numbers that of all other classes put together by a lot. We see that

this development can in no way be described as so healthy a one as it has been described by people who from the growth in all the *strata* of property-owners now derive a complete justification for the entirety of social development under capitalism. Only one thing is indisputable: capitalism has quite uncommonly raised the wealth of society; but the distribution of this wealth has not in every respect undergone the development that the socialists earlier presupposed, but it has partly taken other routes. With that, the problems with which socialism is confronted have certainly changed, and the realisation and recognition of this fact as well as the question of which conclusions were to be drawn from it have for a long time constituted a tremendous object of theoretical and practical dispute among socialists.

One could now raise the question: How can the continued existence of the middle *strata* be reconciled with the concentration of enterprises under capitalism? After all, capitalism does lead more and more towards the concentration of enterprises, ever more towards large-scale production and machine production in society. Although the small and medium enterprises have remained almost boundless in number, then still the large enterprises have hugely grown, not only in number but also especially in the mass of persons employed by them. And how does that development of the distribution of wealth let itself be reconciled with this? It gets its explanation in part from the mobility of modern capital, the mobility that capital has acquired by means of the great expansion of the various forms of mutual associations [*Genossenschaften*], to which after all fundamentally the joint-stock corporations must also be counted, however much they may also diverge from other cooperatives legally and in their structure. This form of cooperativity, of collective capital, makes it possible for a whole series of *strata* in the population to maintain their continued existence, which would have irretrievably had to vanish if in every firm only one individual person or a very small group of people could ever have been proprietors. In Germany, in 1909—the last date for which the Reich Statistical Yearbook gives details—there were 5222 joint-stock corporations with an equity [*Aktienkapital*] of around 14 billion gold marks, and 626 million mark in preferential shares [*Vorzugsaktien*]. Besides this, there were limited-liability mutuals and companies numbering 16,500 with 3½ billion in joint capital [*Genossenschaftskapital*]. Further, a great number of registered cooperatives, to which there also comes a quite enormous capital in obligations of the joint-stock corporations, which also amounts to many billions, and which has quite vastly increased, not only

as a result of industrial development, but also military development, rising armament, etc., and not least the so strongly increased state sovereign bonds. Through all of that, the number of bearers of parts of the products of the national economy has risen tremendously. If Lassalle spoke of the workers' battalions, then today one can barely still speak merely of shareholders' battalions, rather one must already speak of army corps, among which the shares in industry have been distributed. The firm itself is regionally bound, but the share, capital, is becoming ever more mobile and can move from hand to hand or even from country to country. This can be seen even with land and landed property, where the mobility of ownership is made possible in the first instance through mortgages [*Hypotheken*], which easily change their holders and can be shared. The mortgage alone does not have full mobility, but this has been provided by the mortgage bond [*Pfandbrief*]. There emerged mortgage companies, which collect mortgages and give in exchange for them mortgage bonds, which now, like a loan bond [*Anleihepapier*], can change their holder every day. In this way, an enormous distribution could take place of the wealth that was invested in land and landed property.

The great increase in the number of stockholders is incidentally from the standpoint of the socialist in no way a gratifying phenomenon. It can only be regarded as pleasing by adherents of capitalism, because thereby a far greater number of people become interested in its continued existence than would otherwise be the case. It explains a whole series of social and political phenomena. In England, the breweries are extraordinarily concentrated, but the breweries' capital is equity, and the number of participating shareholders runs into very many thousands. The brewing industry is now in England to a high degree a political industry. Up to the middle of the 1870s, the brewers were liberal, which in England also meant democratic. They were in favour of free trade, because they were interested in the free import of barley. There is in England a major daily newspaper, which is not sold on the street, but which nonetheless has a respectable circulation, the *Morning Advertiser*. That is the paper of the brewing industry, which is on display in every bar. The drinkers are naturally also interested in the beer. Now, the entire political stance of the brewing industry changed because the Liberal Party started to deeply support the temperance and moderation movements. That brought the breweries into opposition towards the Liberal Party. The more it became radicalised and supported the facilitation of prohibitions and restrictions on pubs, the more this contradiction intensified, and so in England the brewing

industry with all its retinue—not only drinkers but also shareholders—became conservative, and that in turn explains the temporarily so significant strengthening of the Conservative Party in England. Connected with this is the interest of the betting races, since most bets are placed in the pubs. That too has a quite substantial social and political effect. The enormous diffusion of brewing capital and the participation of the general public in other interests of the breweries here have a political effect.

The mobility of modern capital has also risen extraordinarily. One can hardly imagine something more mobile than a bond certificate. One can buy it at 1 o'clock at any stock exchange, and at half past 1 it can already have been sold again. Likewise every industrial share, etc. This prodigious mobility of capital has again contributed to strengthening the pull towards the cities. The capitalist, who does not work, whether they draw their income from agriculture, from commerce, or from industry, can now live in the city. We were able to observe this before the war, e.g., in tax quotas. In the regions of the mining and industrial sectors of the Rhineland, the local income surtax was 200 to over 300 percent that of the state income tax, but here in Berlin, where a large part of the people live who draw their income from those branches of production, one for a long time did not go over a surtax multiple of 100 percent. We have, e.g., in my municipality of Schöneberg, had to fight for a long time to finally move the majority of the municipal council to raise the surtax multiple by 10 percent to 110 percent. But in the industrial areas, the surtaxes were 200 to 300 percent, because the shareholders to whom the net proceeds of production went, did not live there. The industrial areas had to carry the burden for the whole working population, while capital made itself scarce from them. One could incidentally also observe something similar in the social structure of Greater Berlin, where the owners and shareholders of large industrial firms lived in the affluent residential suburbs [*Villenvororten*], whereas the workers of these firms resided in the industrial quarters and their surrounding areas.

Thus the cities in Germany grew in the most varied way. In 1867, in Germany $^{2}/_{3}$, of the population, 66.7 percent, still lived in the countryside, i.e., in the small municipalities of up to 2000 inhabitants. At the turn of the century it was now only $^{5}/_{11}$, around 45 percent; in 1910 the percentage had fallen to 40, and there is no doubt whatsoever that we had gone down even further up to the eve of the war. The countryside was becoming more and more depopulated, and the cities grew. Of the 65 million inhabitants that Germany had in 1910, only 26 million now still lived

in the municipalities of under 2000 inhabitants. Through this, that overwhelming city culture was brought about which, as already mentioned, was an important moment exacerbating the so-called agrarian question. Almost in parallel with this development went the rise in Germany's external trade. Germany had become an industrialised state, and the characteristic of an industrialised state is that it has large exports of finished manufacturing products with fairly high imports of raw materials and foodstuffs. In Germany, the imports of food were not as high as in England, where the production of grain declined extraordinarily in the nineteenth century, so that it produced barely a sixth of its bread demand itself. This especially as a result of its enormous colonial development, whereby one must add to the English colonies in the economic sense of the population structure fundamentally also the United States of America, even if these were politically completely independent. After all, for decades they took in an ever greater percentage of the English population. From 1848 to mid-1885, over 6 million people emigrated from England, and by far the largest part of them moved to the United States.

This gigantic emigration explains several phenomena that seemed inexplicable to many people for a long time. In the first half of the nineteenth century, England had a powerful workers' movement, the Chartist movement, which bore a downright revolutionary character. But gradually that declined, and when in Germany the socialist movement was already fairly strong, in England there was almost nothing left of its own whatsoever. For that, a whole series of explanations have been offered. One factor lies in the fact that the great defeat of Chartism had a very disheartening effect, and further a certain accommodation by the bourgeois-liberal parties dampened its revolutionary urge. But also the workers' trade union movement took on a somnolent, almost completely bureaucratic character. In my view, that great emigration also contributed to it. In general it is those with the most quick-witted natures that emigrate, who are not for that reason always the best people. Now if a country loses so great a percentage of its most animated elements, that can only have the effect that among those left behind, the sleepy, indifferent, or at least pliant elements predominate, and so England's great emigration also caused that change in the character of its workers' movement.

Germany, with its far more numerous population, had a significantly smaller emigration than England. All the more did its external trade develop in recent decades. In 1913, the last year for which we have statistics that were not influenced by the war, the value of its imports of raw

materials amounted to 3½ billion, its net imports of semi-finished manufactured products to 86 million, of living animals to 280 million, of foodstuffs to nearly 1.8 billion, altogether 5.6 billion gold marks. By contrast, the value of its net exports of finished products ran to 4.8 billion. That is the image of the advanced industrialised state, which exports finished manufactured products, in which there is embedded mostly higher human labour, and imports raw materials, agricultural products, and semi-finished manufactured products in exchange, in which human labour plays a comparatively small role.

Where the major business crises are concerned, which arise on the domain of the competitive capitalist economy, the first of these appeared in England, the home of modern large-scale industry, in 1825, ten years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The restoration of general peace in Europe initially had as a result an enormous increase of production and prosperity associated with it, which lasted for nearly ten years, but then resulted in a major crisis, while business activity stagnated almost entirely. Such general crises repeated from then on almost every ten years, and various theories emerged about their nature, their causes, and their future—theories that also soon led to lively discussions in the socialist world.

Regarding the explanation of crises, for a long time there were two opposing views: The first derived them from overproduction, the other from underconsumption, which are very much not the same thing. Underconsumption was explained by saying that far more was produced than the population, in accordance with its composition, was in the position to buy, and hence also did not consume. In this, one started out from the idea, firstly, that the social middle *strata* were disappearing—the famous bottleneck theory—and secondly, that the situation of the lower *stratum*, the working class, was continually worsening as a result of its increasing numbers, and its growth would hence lead to immiseration. Thus purchasing power could not keep pace with the development of production, and from time to time crises set in, which became ever stronger from epoch to epoch. The theory of overproduction has as its foundation partly the same picture of the circulation of the general course of business as the theory of underconsumption, namely a period with a good run of business, which leads to one with feverishly heightened production, the stores become overfilled, a shortage of money sets in, and forced sales lead to a business crash, which is followed by a time of stagnation, of general stasis. Then business gradually recovers, and the circulation outlined repeats on a broader foundation. But it also says that as a result of the

anarchy of free competition in the economic market overproduction in fact takes place, not merely in comparison to purchasing power, but in the most varied domains beyond real demand. For example, more raw materials and semi-finished products than the existing factories can process. In the face of such anarchy, the business crisis is a means of temporary healing.

Another theory of crisis is that of the English philosopher and social economist Stanley Jevons. This brings crises into a causal connection with the appearance of sunspots, which repeats every ten to eleven years, and which has an unfavourable impact on the shape of harvests, which in the great significance of the products of agriculture, i.e., the prices of its products for economic life, lowers the purchasing power for industrial products. This theory has not influenced socialist thinking very much, although one must admit that the development of agriculture has a major part to play in crises. Let us hence remain with the two aforementioned theories, of which we have seen that their dispute leaves the fact and its original connection with the capitalist productive and economic order beyond doubt. On the basis of certain passages in Karl Marx's *Capital*, the view became consolidated in socialist circles that a repetition of the crises in the same form after ten years contradicted the increasing level of production and economic anarchy, but rather that the cycle would gradually become ever shorter. It conformed to the capitalist hunt for markets in the context of rising productivity that the development was taking place in the form of a spiral that becomes ever narrower, so that crises pile up over time and take on ever greater scope.

In the time where the socialist movement experienced a particular upsurge in Germany, in the 1870s, this view seemed to be completely confirmed. After the German-French War, initially in Germany an immense prosperity set in, but this fairly quickly came to an abrupt end.[4] Already in 1873–1874, a great stock market crash happened, followed by a tremendous stagnation in business, which lasted until the 1880s. In the world of the workers, one saw a great immiseration ahead, and hence concluded that the bankruptcy of the capitalist economy was at hand. The Marxist way of seeing things pushed back all earlier socialist theories, and the opinion grew very strongly that one was standing before a complete collapse of bourgeois society. But this collapse did not come about, but rather something else instead. From the start of the 1890s, a period of prosperity began that lasted far longer than the earlier periods of prosperity, and which was not followed by major stagnation for a long time. Bourgeois economists and socialists too saw themselves prompted to ask the question

of how to explain this phenomenon and what was to be concluded from it. In many quarters one recognised that the cause lay in the unsuspected development of transportation and the global economy, which had brought about an enormous expansion of markets along with great improvement of news reporting and commercial statistics. Business affairs could be overseen better. Further, a strong organisation of capital, or rather of business-owners, took place in cartels and syndicates, which made it possible to avert certain effects of crises, partly by restricting production oneself, in order to impose certain limits on the vast discrepancy between production and turnover. I myself concluded at the time from these and some other phenomena that we would probably barely have to reckon with crises as they had manifested previously for the foreseeable time, and expressed this in a work that prompted a bit of a sensation. This earned me all manner of ripostes, among them quite particularly from the professor of economics Ludwig Pohle.[5] My work appeared in 1899, and already in 1900 a new business crisis set in. Pohle held this up triumphantly against me. But the fact remains that the crisis came to an end surprisingly quickly, and already in 1902 a recovery set in, which lasted for a very long time, namely 1906–1907, when again business pressure set in, which however was also only short, and which was then followed by no larger depression until the world war.

So in fact, through the organisations of capital and a whole series of related causes, the circumstance came about that the crises of the earlier years did not repeat themselves. Moments and causes of crisis are after all always present, but also countervailing forces, which at the time that Karl Marx was writing were not yet to be fully overseen. Incidentally, to a certain degree, the vast increase of armament, which preoccupied workers to an increasing extent, also contributed to alleviating crises.

This reference to the tendency of crises to weaken is, however, not remotely to be conceived of as a defence of the capitalist economy. That the organisation of capital had significant disadvantages, I like others did not fail to emphasise, and that must happen here too. Crises as they were previously had one positive effect, that the need to ease the burden on markets by cheapening goods was not removed but increased, and with that also the consideration for the consumption by the masses came into its own. The crises could be seen—like a fever is by doctors—as a kind of reaction by the economic body to overcome damaging factors. That was exaggeratedly optimistic, but there was still an element of truth in this nonetheless. Now if business-owners' capital organises itself and mitigates

crises, this happens for the purpose of keeping prices high through coalitions. Through this, a primary moment of defending the capitalist economy, namely its famed constant cheapening of products and hence the expansion of consumption among the great mass of the population, is impaired or cancelled out. One can hence see this capitalist countermeasure after all as of only very conditional use, and not as a means to fully heal the damages that the capitalist economy has as a result. It offsets once again the increase of the well-being of the working classes to an extraordinary degree.

Now certainly we have counter-actions by the workers themselves in the workers' organisations, wage struggles, etc., which have also contributed much to halting the effect of the pressure of capital on the situation of the masses and the domination of capital over production. To be mentioned here is the growth in workers' claimed demands. One can naturally conceive of this very differently depending on the various standpoints. The socialist will consider this increase in demands to be very desirable. They will, as the case may be, only object that the higher incomes of workers are used in the wrong way. But one should not forget the following. The worker who works long hours cannot, if wages rise, very quickly change their way of life, they will hence in fact partly squander the extra earnings they have received in a good economic period. In order for them to use it better there is required a regular rise, not ups and downs and sinking depending on the state of the economy. Apart from the justification of the workers in raising their claimed demands, a second thing should also not be forgotten, namely that with the rise in the wealth of bourgeois society, the workers' vital demands gradually also rise by themselves. After all, they live in society, they see what goes on there, and they must adjust to the general development of lifestyle habits. Certain houses with which they were previously satisfied are no longer built because hygiene demands have risen, and also housing policy establishes other fundamental principles. The social demands *on* the worker rise, and they must raise them too. That is one of the factors of the continual struggle over wages, and that leads us on to the theme of class struggle in modern society.

Yet before that I want to say a few more things about the effects of the war and the Revolution on economic development. On the whole, it would be overhasty here to want to prophesy, because the effect cannot overall yet be fully overseen at all, in the face of the complete disorder of the conditions that have set in. We do not yet have a complete grip on the economic effects of the great oppositions between nations and the great

shifts within classes. We have no statistics as yet about whether the development of classes that was outlined above will continue to hold in the way that we have seen in the last decade before the war. We cannot yet oversee whether we will still further have that growth in the middle income *strata* that could be noticed before the war. We lack statistics about the contemporary strength of the various classes. How things will take shape in Germany is difficult to say, quite particularly because its industry has to reckon with incalculable difficulties. Germany's possibilities for sales outlets in the world have declined greatly, and Germany's objective production costs have uncommonly increased. It must now buy its raw materials, ores, etc., for a great part from countries with a high exchange rate, and hence the major question arises of whether industry can still continue to occupy the same position in the world economy that it held before the war. In general, the tendency will probably be that we will have an increase in occupation in agriculture, that is, a relative growth in the agrarian population, because Germany does not have the means to buy foodstuffs and semiluxury goods [*Genussmittel*] from abroad on as large a scale as before. A major part of German social policy will not be directed towards bringing more population into the countryside than flows from the countryside into industry and the cities—a question to which a whole series of problems of socialism are attached. The mere departure of workers for the countryside would under previous conditions in fact mean a lowering of their economic, social, and cultural *niveau*. Hence, measures must be taken to prevent this effect. Another phenomenon of significance is the immense expropriation of members of the middle classes through the collapse in the exchange rate. Hundreds of thousands of petty rentiers have been completely proletarianised by it. Now, on what scale other classes and *strata* have risen through it, that we can similarly not yet overview. But these things are significant for the shift of political power relations in society, and that too leads us back to the question of class struggles in modern society. This is the object of the following chapter, and leads on to the further question of the theories of the state in the ranks of socialists.

Notes

1. The difference between Bernstein's usage of *Angestellter* [employee] and *Arbeiter* [worker] here aligns with the usual legal distinction. Employees are required to provide services personally, under mutual obligation with the employer (work–salary), and under the employer's control. Workers who are

not employees are able, at will and without penalty, to accept or reject any offer of work they are made—hence the assumption throughout Bernstein's writings that workers have no structural basis to be loyal to any particular business or business-owner.

2. Julius Wolff (1834–1910), German poet and author, one of several 'bull's-eye pane' writers [*Butzenscheibendichter*] who came to prominence in the late nineteenth century, so called due to their thematisation of ideologised nationalist and heroic motifs of chivalry, *Minnesang*, and faux-medieval romanticism.
3. Johannes Franz von Miquel (1828–1901), Prussian politician and financial reformer, in 1891 introduced a revolutionary tax system based on income, wealth, and commercial tax elements, abolishing class-based taxation in favour of a progressive tax rate.
4. Bernstein is here referring to the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871).
5. Ludwig Pohle (1869–1926), German economist, associated with the social-reformist tendency in the historical school of economics, known derisively as 'socialists of the chair' [*Kathedersozialisten*].

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CHAPTER 7

Socialism and the Theory of Class Struggle

The *Communist Manifesto* as a proclamation of class struggle—Adolphe Blanqui and Karl Marx—The concept of class: estate and class—Marx on the fragmentation of classes—The class struggle of the non-proletarians—The workers' class struggle and its forms—Class struggle and the material and intellectual elevation of the working class—The development of trade unions and the expansion of collective wage agreements—Class struggle and the legal elevation of the workers.

The question of class struggle in bourgeois society took root in the literature of socialism as an object of dispute on the basis of the theory laid down by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. This piece of writing, which Marx and Engels elaborated at the end of 1847 and which appeared at the start of 1848, attained a great significance in the Social Democracy of all countries. It has been translated into countless languages, and has the reputation of a kind of catechism for the socialist movement, and it is also in any case extraordinarily worth reading—already because of its wonderfully succinct language, but at the same time also because of the great influence that it exercised and still exercises on socialist thinking. It should only be recalled that the Bolshevists, who call themselves communists everywhere, appeal primarily to this work.

Now, in the *Communist Manifesto* one reads in the first section right after the introduction:

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M. S. Ostrowski, *Eduard Bernstein on Socialism Past and Present*,
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> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.
>
> Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.[1]

This passage has been very strongly attacked, which for the most part is due to the fairly crudely simplistic interpretation that it has been given in socialist ranks. Many conceived it in such a way that the entirety of history consists of a succession of acrimonious class struggles. But that is not what the passage says. It never occurred to Marx and Engels, who knew their history very well, to make so platitudinous a claim. What they actually wanted was to bring into view the fact that throughout the entire history of humanity—Engels later restricted that: with the exception of prehistory—move class contradictions, which consistently sooner or later intensify into vigorous class struggles. In 1859, in his preface to the work *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx also gave this idea a more scientific form. He follows on here from the theory of Saint-Simon, that the history of humanity takes place in alternating periods, a so-called organic period, where the contradictions sort themselves out and development takes place comparatively regularly without great struggles, and then an actual critical period, where it comes to revolutions, and outlines the nature of this periodicity in a few brief sentences. So long as classes exist in society, class contradictions will also exist, economic development creates them in ever new forms and drives them to their extreme points. In each case, a lower *stratum* pushes its way upwards, and if it is strong enough to want and to be able to become the ruling class, then the period of social revolution enters in, which also in turn may not be crudely read as mere street-fighting. Rather, the entire state of society is convulsed, the social struggles between classes take on greater intensity, the ruling *strata* no longer feel safe, and ultimately in one way or another a radical social and political transformation takes place. This fact also cannot be disputed at all, on the contrary against the above passage from the *Communist Manifesto* accusations of plagiarism has been levelled. The Georgian socialist V. Cherkezov cites for this a statement by the economist Adolphe Blanqui,

brother of the communist and revolutionary Auguste Blanqui.[2] This Adolphe Blanqui namely wrote in 1825:

> There have always only been two opposing parties, that of the people who want to live from their own labour, and that of the people who want to live from the labour of others. Patricians and plebeians, free men and villeins, slaves and freedmen, Guelphs and Ghibellines, Red and White Rose, Cavaliers and Roundheads, all of these are only changed forms of the same species.[3]

Certainly, this passage looks uncommonly similar to that set down in the *Communist Manifesto*, and the claim that Marx plagiarised it could have an aura of justifiability. But if one examines the two statements more closely, one will nevertheless come upon a weighty difference between them. In Blanqui, completely different oppositions are lumped together. Guelphs and Ghibellines confront one another completely differently to proletarians and capitalist business-owners. They are two parties of similar types that fight against one another, because each one wants to rule, but they do not represent any social contradiction. Then free men and villeins. That is a distinction, but not a class contradiction. In Marx it reads: "free-man and slave". Villeins are not slaves anymore. Marx then also writes: "lord and serf", in which the feudal relationship is sharply reflected. He and Engels restrict themselves to listing differences that are truly similar in nature. Incidentally, such contrasts lay so strongly in the spirit of the epoch at the time, that it would not be hard to find precedents for Blanqui as well. Marx never claimed that his ideas had never been expressed by anyone before. But in any case in the Marxist summary a significant advance reveals itself relative to the Blanquist one: a far more precise specification of the nature of economic and social contradictions.

All the same, in Marx-Engels too there is a bit to criticise; their systematisation too is not quite flawless. They straightforwardly oppose guild-masters and journeymen to one another. But between guild-masters and journeymen in fact no class contradiction takes place for centuries. Nothing of what one reads about alleged class struggles between guild-masters and journeymen in the Middle Ages stands up to closer scrutiny. About the journeymen's movement of the Middle Ages, Georg Schanz has written a very valuable book: *The History of the German Journeymen's Associations*.[4] Here he recounts 53 records, but if one looks at them more closely, it shows that not one of them addresses an actual class struggle between

journeymen and guild-masters. Bruno Schönlank speaks constantly of class struggles in his book *Social Struggles Three Centuries Ago*, but he provides evidence of not a single actual class struggle between journeymen and guild-masters.[5] One of the more famous guild struggles by the journeymen in the Middle Ages was the struggle of the Kolmar journeyman bakers, which lasted for ten years, from 1495 to 1505. But what was this struggle actually about? About the position of the bakers in the church procession. Now at the time that was not a matter to be taken as lightly as it seems today. Before the Reformation, at a time where the Church still filled the whole of civic-social life, where the processions had a societal significance and the social rank of individuals and groups was reflected in what position they held in the procession, in that time such a dispute had a completely different significance than today. But a class struggle it was not, it was more a struggle by one industry against other industries. I traced fairly carefully why the journeymen were struggling at the time. When I preoccupied myself with the history of a certain industry, I studied a whole series of documents of this and other industries, and I never came across a struggle that was an actual class struggle. It was often a matter of disputes between masters and journeymen. But disputes are not yet a class struggle. Often, the disputes between journeymen and masters were similar to the spats we have between students and professors today. The students sometimes have complaints against the senates, and assert them in the committees; but one will not want to claim that such conflicts are class struggles.

That leads us to the question: What does a class even mean? A class is not to be mistaken for an estate [*Stand*]. Such mistaking has taken place for a long time, the one word was often used for the other. Even as clear a thinker, and in his choice of expression as customarily extraordinarily careful a writer as Ferdinand Lassalle gave his famous work, later entitled *The Workers' Programme*, the title: *About the Connection of the Idea of the Present Historical Period with the Significance of the Workers' Estate*. It is truthfully a classic work, which I recommend that everyone read who wants to become acquainted with socialism's world of ideas, since Lassalle was a master of style. Some of his popular works are so exquisitely written that in my opinion it would be advisable to introduce extracts from them into schoolbooks as subjects of instruction, as model examples of good, clear representation, and also as counterpieces against the disgraceful mistreatment that the German language suffers in daily journalism today. So with respect to wage-labourers Lassalle uses the

term workers' estate [*Arbeiterstand*]. But already at that time one could no longer speak of such an estate. Society was grouped according to estates in the Middle Ages and the Late Middle Ages. The estate is a delimited *stratum* with particular rights, which are regulated by law. Acceptance into the estate is limited, it has its own rights and laws. In general there prevails within the estate for a long time a strong equality of living situation, and only bit by bit do greater economic differences form in individual ones of them, as we also find them in the castes in India, which after all are only an intensification of divisions into estates, or rather a more acute preliminary stage. In India, it happens that a lower-lying caste often has very rich members, and higher-lying castes poorer members. But even the poorest members of the higher caste feel dishonoured if they have to eat at the same table as a member of a caste below theirs, however rich that member is. That was naturally not the case with us in the Middle Ages to the same extent, but the estates still demarcated themselves far more acutely than classes do today, and every individual profession, every guild formed its own estate. It delimited itself from others, and felt no solidarity whatsoever with other estates. This guild spirit reproduced itself until right into the start of the last century. Even in my youth, there was generally little feeling of solidarity present between journeymen shoemakers, locksmiths, or perhaps joiners. In the Hasenheide near Berlin they brawled with each other on the dancefloors, they barely noticed the fact that they altogether belonged to a proletarian class. They knew well the difference between rich and poor, between master and journeyman, but they would have been amazed if one had said to them that the journeyman shoemaker was the same as a locksmith; they often felt a stronger solidarity with their masters than with the journeymen of another industry. Yes, when capitalist production started to assert itself, the journeymen are often far more conservative towards it than the masters. The persecution of craftsmen who were not members of guilds—in the tailoring profession one called them *Bönhasen*—and the struggles against the invading machines were waged for the most part from the side of the journeymen far more fiercely than by the masters. The class is something completely different from the estate. The class is a social *stratum*, which of course is also formed through the similarity of living conditions, but it is not a *stratum* demarcated through law or statute or professional membership, but rather it is subject to general societal development. Class formation goes ahead alongside the development of estates and later also within the estate itself. As the case may be, the class blasts apart the estate. The lines of delineation between

estates run vertically, those of the distinction between classes horizontally, i.e., according to the level of property and income. For this, one can cite another bit from the *Communist Manifesto*. On page 24 of the most recent German edition it reads:

> The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.[6]

That is naturally correct, that did happen. The feudal society perished due to a whole series of circumstances, which partly can be traced back to the development of world intercourse, partly to domestic economic conditions, and which had as a consequence a strong growth of cities, and their greater significance and power, and at the same time an increase in princely absolutism, which was initially directed against the feudal lords. The absolute state emerges, and feudal society is demolished, in part with the contribution of state legislation.

The *Communist Manifesto* says in the section "Bourgeoisie and Proletarians" the following:

> Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.[7]

The authors of the *Manifesto* assumed this, so too did all the socialists who were students of Marx and Engels, and likewise Ferdinand Lassalle assumed this too. They all reasoned that society would simplify itself into the great contradiction: bourgeoisie and proletariat, while all the intermediary *strata* lying in between them would disappear. There is something right in this assumption too, but it does not exhaust the matter. It is precisely the great mistake that modern communists also make, that they want to let the *Communist Manifesto* be decisive, as the highest product of the Marxian spirit. But the *Communist Manifesto* is a product of Marx and Engels' early development, and as significant minds as the two already were then, one must still allow them the right of youth, which inclines towards rash generalisation. What they had seen before them in England, the model country of the capitalist economy, to that they attributed a

linear development, generalised it, and related it to the entirety of modern society. But major parts of the prediction they argued for at the time have not come about. If one reads the works that Marx wrote at the highpoint of his development, one finds completely different language. In the third volume of *Capital*, which of course the fewest people have read—aside from Marx's students barely a few hundred will have read it—Marx distinguishes firstly another further factor very strictly, to which he makes as yet no reference at all in the *Communist Manifesto*, namely he differentiates between landed property and capital ownership. Accordingly, he now divides the classes differently. He speaks of the three *major* classes of modern society, which distinguish themselves through the nature of their source of income, namely labour wage, profit, and ground rent, and then he speaks about a multitude of *strata* within these great classes. He writes in the final chapter, entitled "Classes":

> The owners merely of labour power, owners of capital, and landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground rent, in other words, wage labourers, capitalists and landowners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production.
>
> In England, modern society is indisputably most highly and classically developed in economic structure. Nevertheless, even here the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. *Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere* (although incomparably less in rural districts than in the cities).[8]

One sees here already that one will not manage simply by speaking of the two great classes "bourgeoisie and proletariat". Marx then raises the question: "What constitutes a class?" and writes that here at first glance the "identity of revenues and sources of revenue" shows itself to be decisive. However, he continues, "from this standpoint, physicians and officials, e.g., would also constitute two classes", and

> The same would also be true of the *infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labour* splits labourers as well as capitalists and landlords—the latter, e.g., into owners of vineyards, farm owners, owners of forests, mine owners and owners of fisheries.[9]

Here the manuscript for the third volume breaks off. Marx sadly never got beyond the first sentences of this chapter, which is so important for his

theory. It can remain undiscussed exactly why he worked on it so little. We can only say so much that even if he had got around to completing it, it would still be inadequate for today. For since the time where Marx wrote the cited passages—his last work on the third volume dates from the start of the 1870s—development has changed so much about social stratification, yielded so many new phenomena, that the picture that he could give at that time would after all be incomplete and in many places even incorrect today. What, e.g., with him is still completely neglected in his evaluation is the question of technical and commercial personnel in the economy. We know what a significant increase this class has undergone since Marx's death.

If today a large share of employees, and not only of technical employees, perceive a strong commonality of interests with the workers, organise themselves similarly to workers and in many cases count themselves among them, then for a long time one observed something completely different, and even today there is still a fairly strong percentage of commercial and technical employees left over who on the basis of their class origin [*Klassenherkunft*] and education feel closer to the business-owners, elements who adopt an intermediary stance, and whom at the time the bourgeois economists greeted as the "new middle class [*Mittelstand*]", which had taken the place of the partly vanished small and medium-sized business-owners [*Mittelstandsunternehmer*]. In any case, capitalist society on the eve of the world war presented a different picture than Marx could sketch out in his day.

Marx derives class membership, as we have seen, from the nature of income sources, and groups these into ground rent, profit, and wages. He is silent on salaries [*Gehalt*], and evidently counts them as part of wages. But that omits the tremendous differences that, e.g., exist among officials [*Beamte*], who after all likewise draw a salary. The *stratum* of officials too has greatly grown in recent times; it has been significantly multiplied by the immense expansion of administration, and if employees and officials from time to time perceive a commonality of interests with the workers, then between these two it also still comes to oppositionalities of interest. What significant differences exist between landowners, depending on whether it is a matter of purely agricultural landownership, forest property, vineyardism, or of ownership of land in mining and fisheries, Marx himself implies, and so we already see that modern society in no way presents the completely simple picture that shows itself to the superficial reader

of the *Communist Manifesto*: Here bourgeoisie, there proletariat, and the middle *strata* disappear.

No, the middle *strata* are not disappearing, but they are changing their character. Earlier in many cases the master craftsmen [*Handwerksmeister*] felt themselves far closer to the workers than to the large business-owners, in whom they saw their virtual enemies, who were suppressing them through capitalist competition. We then further, which Marx does not mention, learned to acknowledge the vitality of farming enterprises. The reasons for this vitality cannot be gone into here, but the fact of it is shown everywhere by statistics. In general, one can say that petty farming in grain cultivation is not competitive with large landownership, where it is a matter of even ground that can easily be worked with machines; by contrast, this relationship changes with hilly ground, and likewise the relationship is different with livestock farming. Here it is decisive that labour is not a purely physical process, but also encompasses intellectual moments, so that the labour of the petty farmer who tills their own land, and raises their own livestock, has a different character than that of the farmhand on the property of the large farmer and large landowner. Even in industry and commerce, the small and medium enterprises have not only maintained themselves, but even increased their number.

Now between all these social *strata* there exists in fact a more or less intensive class contradiction, a contradiction of interests, and where there are contradictions of interest there are also respectively more or less vigorous struggles. Where large landownership, namely latifundism, predominates, there are struggles by farmers against these large landowners. Democratic farmers' parties form, which find themselves curtailed by large parts of the land being in the hands of the large landowners. In almost all countries, from time to time here true class struggles have taken place. In Germany, these struggles lie a longer while back, after through the movement for agricultural tariffs a solidarity of interests had come about between a great part of the farmers and the large landowners. Large and small agriculturalists organised together to struggle against the merchants and beyond them ultimately also against the consumers. They demanded high tariffs in order to be able to sell their products at what they saw as a reasonable price, and thereby stood in contradiction to the great mass of consumers, who are not themselves producers. Further, in Germany we had an alliance between industrialists and agriculturalists, the great coalition for a customs tariff that would benefit both of them.

But the majority of the population consists of consumers who are not business-owners in production—workers are of course producers too, but they are not business-owners—but rather consumers, just as teachers, officials, etc., are consumers too. Here, a class struggle emerges which, though it does not play out in the streets, does so instead in the parliaments and the press. But struggle is still struggle. The struggle of the agriculturalists against the consumers, of consumers against producers, of craftsmanship against commerce and large-scale industry, all of these are class struggles. The master craftsmen who want to preserve their masterly fiefdom [*Meisterherrlichkeit*] by means of coercive laws, guilds, compulsory affiliations [*Zwangsinnungen*], etc., struggle as the case may be on the one hand against the workers, on the other hand against commerce. They seek to protect themselves against it, because in their view it bears down on them by supposedly bringing their products to market more cheaply than they can produce them. There is also a latent class struggle, i.e., one that does not manifest in the usual form, where the large capitalists in industry have allied into cartels; this is directed against consumers, since cartels are always connected with the purpose of keeping prices high. Besides this there is the struggle of the cartels against those business-owners in their branch of industry who are not allied with them, against the so-called outsiders. One knows what harsh means the cartels recourse to in many cases in order to either force outsiders to join their cartel, or to paralyse them entirely. One knows the incidents where cartels imposed a kind of boycott on outsiders, where they completely denied them the procurement of raw materials and auxiliary equipment, means of struggle that are at least as harsh as those that the workers use in the trade union struggle. These are class struggles or partially such in modern society, within the *strata* of the business-owners and the relatively independent population classes themselves. There are also additionally pseudo-class struggles. As one example I could mention that during the world war various people among us, among them a well-known author—I do not want to name him—presented the struggle between Germany and England as a class struggle, whereby Germany was supposed to be the poor proletarian and England the capitalist exploiter.[10] That was a very beguiling picture for war sentiment, but it was not accurate. For so far as the struggle was an economic struggle, it was only a struggle of interests, but not a class struggle. If on the other hand, today the leader of the Polish party in Upper Silesia, Korfanty, lets his press write that his struggle is the struggle of the Polish proletariat against German capital—a claim that is making a deep

impression in many countries too—then that is likewise not correct.[11] If, e.g., the great majority of mineworkers in Upper Silesia are Poles, then still most of Upper Silesia's metalworkers are Germans. And many of the Polish-speaking workers in Upper Silesia are in favour of its remaining part of Germany.[12] The struggle there, even if here and there it seems to workers to be a class struggle, is in its nature a national struggle and nothing else.

But of all these class struggles that play out today in society in the most various forms, which from time to time take on a very violent form and then subside and are pushed into the background by other struggles, the greatest class struggle still remains all the same the struggle between the class of workers, of wage-recipients, and the class of business-owners. The great extension of this struggle is the natural consequence of the great expansion of modern industry. The working class in today's society takes up ever greater space, an infinitely greater one than at the time when Lassalle was writing. In 1907, we had 17 million wage-labourers in industry, commerce, and transport. Where did these workers live? The overwhelming number lived in the major cities and industrial centres, precisely where the intellectual and political life of the nation pulses the most intensively, whereas agriculture is mostly separated from this life. Now, in the major cities and industrial centres, the workers play an increasingly influential role; they take up ever more space within the population, and already just thereby very strongly affect general opinion [*das allgemeine Urteil*], and, depending on how they win their rights, later also politics. The struggle of the working class takes place in various forms as the struggle for influence and power in the state and municipalities, for influence on legislation and administration. So long as the workers are a small *stratum* and have not yet attained class consciousness, there is little to be remarked on in this. Even today, in small locales where the number of wage-labourers is low, most of them are politically indifferent. But the more the number of workers in the centres grows, the more they take part in public life and feel the need to be represented in state and municipalities, and to win influence and power. This influence increases with the growth of democratic institutions, with the expansion of the franchise, which in the long term also cannot be denied to the workers at all. Even before the Revolution, with us in Germany the workers exerted significant political influence. Apart from the fact that in 1866 at the founding of the North German Confederation, they were given the general, equal, and secret franchise, one also had to ease their entry into municipalities. Ultimately

even the once so firm wall of the Prussian three-class franchise was breached by their onslaught.[13] Under the extended franchise, they penetrated in growing numbers into public bodies, and, what is almost more important, through their strength and number and the intensity of their struggle they also achieved significant influence over wider public opinion. In the lecture halls, in the parliaments, and in government one spoke about the needs and demands of the working class very differently than before. The workers also pushed through a whole series of reforms, which even if they were not revolutionary they were still very meaningful in their social impact. That is one, the political form of the workers' struggle. As it seemed to Marx at his time, it was substantially directed towards revolution, under which here is to be understood not a social change that takes place in affairs, but that a class through an uprising, etc., places itself in charge of rulership, and displaces the classes that were in this position. That is what the Marxian movement still aimed for, that is what it had to aim for, since when Marx was writing, the workers did not yet have the franchise in any country. They still had to fight to win it first, and according to the state of things it seemed as if they would only be able to gain this right by way of violent revolution. But after it was won, which in most countries happened in another fashion, a completely different political struggle of the working class had to develop. In part, Marx and Engels still lived to see this, and also showed growing understanding and interest in this. They took lively intellectual part in the electoral campaigns of the workers' parties. But they did not live to experience the stronger activity of workers in public administrative bodies, the compulsory cooperatives [*Zwangsgenossenschaften*], municipalities, *Länder*, Reich, and in their own free administrative bodies, which defines our epoch. Yet it is beyond doubt that without training in the skills for administration, the influence of the proletariat in society can only be limited in the long term. But this itself could only be realised by, and be a result of, a more-or-less democratic development.

The other form of the workers' class struggle is that of the direct struggle in the economic domain, which is substantially waged through coalitions of workers, which today we call trade unions, as well as workers' cooperatives [*Arbeitergenossenschaften*], but ones of a different kind than existed at the time when Marx was writing. The coalition struggle by workers against business-owners is in the majority of cases a struggle over the level and form of wages, but it will also be waged about the length and ordering of working time as well as about workers' rights, namely the

workers' rights within the enterprises, etc. These struggles play out in the early days of capitalism as rebellious fights. That is how Marx still characterises them in his work *The Poverty of Philosophy*. There, the trade unions bear an almost unmediated revolutionary character. That was in the 1840s. Marx already judges the trade unions differently twenty years later, in a letter of 1868 to J. B. von Schweitzer, the then-President of the General German Workers' Association [*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*], when this man tried to organise trade unions in Germany.[14] In the letter, Marx criticised Schweitzer's plan, which amounted to unifying the entire movement according to a certain fixed schema within one great united body, and he explains that this would not be acceptable, and that the plan would meet with much resistance. He sees precisely already a different trade union movement before him, with regular firm professional associations, but does not express himself in greater detail about their value. The start of a theory of trade union struggle we do not find with him at all, but rather only an appreciation of the fact of this struggle as a stirring by the proletariat for certain purposes. It was not possible for him to penetrate more deeply into the actual character and inherent nature of the trade union struggle, because at his time everything related to this was still emerging and underdeveloped.

On the question of whether trade unions are fit for purpose or not, then and much later great struggles played out within the socialist camp. Among the socialists, there were some who very seriously opposed trade unions in general. In the first place, it was the utopians, people who had worked out in their imagination or speculation entire plans for a new society, and only thought of their realisation. For them, the class struggle of the trade unions was a disruptive moment, and apart from that the objects of trade union struggle were in their eyes trivialities, which did not come into consideration compared with the striving for an ideal society. So they adopted a dismissive stance towards the unions. The radical social-revolutionaries, whom one could best describe as Blanquists, and whose movement was at home in France, were also opponents of the trade unions. There was likewise in England among the Chartists a tendency that aimed for overthrow through revolution, and to which hence the trade unions' movement was likewise a disturbance. That is, struggles by the workers for higher wages were not inconvenient for them, they occasionally provoked them themselves in order thereby to achieve revolutionary insurrections; by contrast, all the less did they want to know about the slow, systematic work of the trade unions, and mostly were in a state of

vigorous feuds with the firmly consolidated unions. Several other socialists were also distant or dismissively disposed towards the trade unions. So in France P.-J. Proudhon, the imaginative author of the work *What is Property?*. He fought against them because he believed he had a better means. He wanted to transform the economy along the lines of the democratic organisation of credit and mutuality in the vein of socialism. In Germany, Ferdinand Lassalle was among the socialists an opponent of the trade unions. His proposal was to free the workers through state-financed producer cooperatives from the pressure of capital. He wanted, as he put it, to preserve the German workers from the misery of the English trade union movement. Another statement from him reads: "The trade union struggle by the workers is the vain struggle of the commodity to behave like a human being through labour". That Lassalle came to this view is explained by the fact that the English trade union movement at his time—in Germany there were merely insignificant local attempts—seemingly only had defeats to show for itself. In 1852, in England, a great struggle by the mechanical engineers had played out, by what at that time was the strongest trade union, and many friends of the workers had become enthusiastic about it, and Christian socialists of the tendency of Maurice and Kingsley had donated large sums of money to it.[15] Despite this, it was lost after lasting for several weeks. Lassalle, as we know from a letter from him to Marx, had followed it with great interest, and its failure seems to have made a great impression on him. It affirmed him in his conception of the natural economic law of wages, according to which this in the long run would be determined by the unconditionally necessary vital needs of the worker, that it never rises above this necessary level for long, because then the increased number of the workers through stronger growth in births, etc., would throw it back down, and on the other hand cannot in the long run remain far below it, because then workers would emigrate, die out, etc. So naturally the trade union struggle must seem a futile endeavour, even if in the final year of his life he still was very enthusiastic about a struggle by the workers of a Hamburg cartwrights' factory. He speaks about this in his last speech, the so-called Ronsdorf speech, and praises it as a proof of the enterprising nature of his followers that it was some of them who had pre-eminently been active in this struggle. Yet that was not as yet any acknowledgment of the unions themselves, and just as students are always more orthodox than their masters, there were among the Lassalleans for a long time impassioned discussions about whether trade unions should exist at all or not. In 1868, Lassalle's most talented

follower, J. B. von Schweitzer, took up the question, after the bourgeois-democratic Progress Party through its member Dr. Max Hirsch and likewise the socialists of the tendency of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, who were associated with the International, had previously already propagated the idea.[16] At the time, a strong movement was coursing through Germany in favour of founding trade union associations, yet among the ranks of its advocates there were great differences regarding their purposes and their forms. Dr. Max Hirsch wanted the trade union associations as a means to create the true harmony of capital and labour, that is, to mitigate the class struggle; while on the contrary, Schweitzer and also Bebel and his comrades wanted them as auxiliary troops to wage and possibly intensify the class struggle; only the orthodox adherents of Lassalle's theories opposed their introduction. The proliferation and expansion of industrial centres, which was connected with advances in Germany's industrial development, cast the decisive vote. The bans on coalitions between workers that still existed had to fall, and trade union associations of the various tendencies came into existence.

All the same, for a longer time, they stayed limited to moderate membership numbers, and hence remained in relation to the successes of their struggles still fully dependent on the economic situation of the market. With a booming economy, they aimed for improvements for the workers, although these were immediately lost once business stagnation set in. The wage curve moves simply in a zig-zag, a situation in which the working class neither becomes materially better off, nor raises its share of culture. But the movement remains, and now looks for the most expedient possible forms, as also happened at the time in England. Internal struggles play out over how the organisations are supposed to be constructed, whether more centralised or more federal, or rather localist, whether the trade union should be attached to supportive institutions, or whether it should be a pure class struggle organisation. The dispute about this lasts a long time in the workers' movement, and from time to time provokes strong passions. With it, it sometimes goes no less viciously than today, and violence is not absent from it either.

After the war era and the years of emergency laws were over, in Germany the dispute over whether trade unions should be localised or centralised was settled. The localist trade unions were defeated. In individual locales they retained a certain support among the workers of the construction industry, but otherwise among the trade unions founded on the basic principle of class struggle the centralist principle was victorious. Now, the

centralist trade unions are mostly associated with supportive institutions, which give them organisatory solidity. Where they do not have these institutions, trade unions gain members almost only in times of a good run of business and successful wage struggles, and once this is over, a great part of the members they have won streams away again and loses interest in them. The more supportive institutions the trade union has, the firmer is its cohesion. All the same, through this it takes on a somewhat conservative character, but for that it achieves greater effects and can through its solidity compel the business-owners to agree to collective labour pay scales [*Arbeitstarife*], which have a longer or shorter duration. The collective wage bargaining movement [*Tarifbewegung*] has indeed also experienced a very great upswing in Germany too. Long since familiar in England, it was barely paid any heed here for a long time. But in 1903, when for the first time a raise was arranged of all the wage agreements that were already in force, which stretched from 1903 to 1905, it turned out that Germany already had 1,577 such scales, on the basis of which 477,000 workers were employed. So wage struggles had already on a wide scale taken on a form—the struggle over collective pay scales—that lent them instead of a more anarchic character a consolidated one, and gradually also became more appealing to the business-owners too. Once these had resolved a pay scale, they could count on being spared for the time of its duration from more serious wage struggle, and hence make their business calculations with greater certainty.

Step by step, collective wage bargains then became perfected not only in the number of firms and workers covered by them, but also in their entire form. They extended to include much broader questions than only the level of wages. At least as important as wages for the worker is their working time, as well as their legal status within the firm, which is variously likewise regulated by the collective agreement. The worker is not only dependent on the business-owner, but also on their officials, like plant managers, supervisors, etc. Before the start of capitalist production, the worker looking for work simply entered the workshop and found a master, who barely belonged to a different societal class than they did themselves. They were welcomed, received a so-called gift, and were not infrequently summoned to join in the next meal. Without degrading themselves in any way, they could go from workshop to workshop looking for work. But the larger the production sites of industry became, the more the way of finding work changed. With cap in hand, the worker stood before the factory and was already given funny looks by the gatekeeper.

The forms of searching for work and labour exchange thus take on through modern industry great significance not only under economic but also under social perspectives. Provisions about this also gradually came into pay scale agreements. If today one is given a wage agreement between workers and owners in a certain industry, then one will often be amazed at its scope. The first major German pay scale, the printers' wage agreement, soon became an entire legal tome, and quite a hefty one at that. In it, all the individual details about wage levels, working time, notice of termination, arbitration of disputes, etc., are regulated. The number of collective wage agreements rose by 1913 to 10,885 for altogether over 143,000 businesses with around 1,400,000 workers. During the war it somewhat declined. But barely is it over and the Revolution has arrived than it does not only rise again immediately, its purview also significantly grows under the influence of the Revolution. Already in 1919, there were 11,000 collective wage agreements for 272,000 businesses with around 6 million workers. Today, the number is even larger, and its efficacy is greater too. At the same time, of course, new problems arose.

In the final years of the war, under the influence of the government labour committees [*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*] had been formed between the organisations of the employers and the workers, which were a stronger form of the collective wage agreement and created a kind of community of interests between the organisations of the business-owners and those of the workers. Through this, the organised workers acquired an interest in raising prices, which was not without its national-economic concerns. At the same time, they seemed to indicate a weakening of the workers' class struggle and were for that reason vigorously resisted by extremist socialists. If it had been a matter of individual organisations of particularly favourably-positioned workers, then this opposition would not have been unjustified. But given the pervasive character that the trade union movement has in Germany and its unification *en bloc* into the General Federation of German Trade Unions [*Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*], the fear that underpins it is very exaggerated. This weakening here relates only to the external form of struggle. In the nature of the matter, it signifies a not inconsiderable rise of the workers in their social right, to be recognised as an organised class by the business-owners, which is the case even in the powerful branches of the major industries, into which the trade union was not able to penetrate before the war.

Many disputes have also been waged about whether these pay scales should be short- or long-term. For the radical socialists, the long-term

wage agreements, stretching out over several years, were anathema. The short-term wage agreement, after all, offered the advantage that the worker is not bound by it if a good economic period sets in, but instead can then fight for a higher wage. That is right as far as it goes, only let us not forget that in this the worker still in turn remains dependent on the economic situation. For if the economy slumps, then they will simply lose again what they had achieved. They can only sustain the higher wage during a good economic situation, whereas by means of long-term wage agreements the workers can help themselves beyond the bad economic situation. But precisely this must be their aspiration, to liberate themselves from the pressure of the economic situation and achieve a consistency in the development of their wages, which carries the assurance of a rise in their entire cultural existence. In part, this has already been achieved through the trade unions. In Germany today they encompass around 9 million workers, and through their firm organisation they form a wall against the negative effects of fluctuations in the economic situation on the level of wages. Already before the war, the German Construction Workers' Association [*Deutscher Bauarbeiterverband*] even managed in the middle of a crisis to negotiate an agreement with the business-owners, in which it was established that there should be no lowering of wages in any business-enterprise. That barely ever happened in England, and was a very significant event within the workers' movement. One can already describe a proper pay scale agreed by a strong trade union as a real piece of participation in the industry, which is far more significant than the so-called profit sharing [*Gewinnbeteiligung*] in the private firm, especially when this goes in parallel with the achievement of political democracy.

For the class struggle, workers' consumer cooperatives also come into consideration, which as such in Germany are comparatively recent phenomena, but have quickly developed to a position of great significance. Already before the war, they started to become here what they had been in England for a longer time already, an auxiliary means for the workers in the trade union struggle against the business-owners. Where workers' consumer cooperatives [*Arbeiterkonsumgenossenschaften*] are strongly constituted, which however can only happen where the working class has burgeoned to a certain numerical strength, they are for the workers a support in their economic struggles, and have the tendency to transition to in-house production [*Eigenproduktion*]. There emerges a cooperative production, which is not the producer cooperative as Lassalle envisaged it intellectually, and which aims for profit, but enterprises instituted by

consumer cooperatives, which are led by these as representatives of a whole collective body [*Gesamtheit*] in the interest of this collectivity.

All these movements are forms of the workers' class struggle in capitalist society. Together, they constitute an organised struggle, which respectively appears revolutionary only to a limited degree, and in its manifestations by no means always assumes the traditional forms of economic or political struggles, but which carries in itself the possibility of a truly social emancipation of the working class.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 482.
2. Jérôme-Adolphe Blanqui (1798–1854), French economic historian and philologist, political economist in the tradition of Jean-Baptiste Say with a Saint-Simonian edge, brother of Louis-Auguste Blanqui. Varlam Cherkezov/Cherkezishvili (1846–1925), Georgian aristocrat and journalist, strongly involved in anarcho-communist and Georgian nationalist movements, ally of Peter Kropotkin and Rudolf Rocker.
3. Jérôme-Adolphe Blanqui, *Histoire de la civilisation industrielle des nations européennes* (Paris: Rignoux, 1825).
4. Georg Ritter von Schanz (1853–1931), German jurist and political scientist, economic historian and financial economist.
5. Bruno Schönlank (1859–1901), German social-democratic politician and journalist, collaborating editor of *Vorwärts* (1892–1894), editor-in-chief of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (1894–1901), one of Bernstein's predecessors as SPD Reichstag deputy for Breslau.
6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 485.
7. Ibid.
8. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 37: Karl Marx—Capital, Volume III* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 870.
9. Ibid., p. 871.
10. Pro-militarist social democrats, especially those associated with the revisionist periodical *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, sought to integrate nationalism into socialist ideology by presenting tensions between nations and diplomatic alliances as equivalent to contradictions between "global classes".
11. Wojciech Korfanty (1873–1939), Polish journalist and politician, opponent of Germanisation and anti-Polish discrimination policies, paramilitary leader during the 1919–1921 Silesian civil uprisings.

12. A plebiscite was carried out on 20 March 1921 to determine a section of the border between Germany and Poland in the ethnically-mixed region of Upper Silesia. 40.6% of eligible voters opted for secession from Germany, leading to over 700 towns and villages becoming part of Poland.
13. The Prussian three-class franchise was an indirect election system used to elect deputies to the Prussian *Abgeordnetenhaus* [House of Representatives] from 1849 to 1918. Voters were classed into three tiers based on the amount of tax they paid, so that the aggregate tax revenue of each class was equal. Each class elected one-third of the electors [*Wahlmänner*] who voted for the deputies, producing a system of apportionment by economic class rather than geographic area or population.
14. Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (1833–1875), German dramatist and social-democratic activist, Lassalle's longest-serving successor as president of the ADAV (1867–1871).
15. Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), English historian, Anglican priest, poet, and social reformer, associated with the Christian socialist and cooperative movements. John Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872), English Anglican theologian and author, founding figure of Christian socialism and promoter of cooperative societies and working men's associations.
16. Max Hirsch (1832–1905), German publisher, educator, and social-reformist politician, long-standing Reichstag deputy (1869–1893) and member of the Prussian House of Representatives (1898–1905) for the German Progress Party [*Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*], German Free-Minded Party [*Deutsche Freisinnige Partei*], and Free-Minded People's Party [*Freisinnige Volkspartei*], co-founder of the liberal *Gewerkvereine* [industrial associations].

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CHAPTER 8

Theory of the State and Socialism

The influence of theory on practice—The dispute over the concept of the state—Anti-statism and the cult of the state in history—The romantic-reactionary and the democratic cult of the state—"The vestal flame of all civilisation"—The critical idea of the state in Marx and Engels—The doctrine of the withering-away of the state—The state as excrescence or parasite on the societal body—Marx and Proudhon on society free of the state—James Ramsay MacDonald and the preservation of the state.

What is the influence of theories on human beings' conduct?

In many places, one encounters exceedingly pessimistic views regarding the question of the relations of theory and practice towards each other. One often hears that practical behaviour is determined by interests, passions, and circumstances, and that the influence of theory on practice in politics as well as otherwise in social life is vanishingly small. I consider this view to be misguided. Certainly, there are many cases where theory influences action little or not at all, where indeed interest, prejudice, passion, etc., play the deciding role, and the number of people who have no clue about theory whatsoever is very great. But one still cannot deny its influence for that reason completely. It is far stronger than most people assume, and especially strong precisely in the upcoming [*aufstrebend*] classes in society. What theoretical conception they have when confronted by some question or other, even if it has not always been preached to them as theory, but only as doctrine, as dogmatic tenets, has under some circumstances a very great influence on their behaviour. One should only recall

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the following: If a part of our working youth, when precisely youthful workers at an age where idealism plays a great role with people, have let themselves been carried away by passion to violent activities—which actually sensible reflection would have told them could not possibly lead to their goal—and one is justified in assuming that the majority of them acted not out of pure, blind destructive rage or hatred, then closer inspection will show that theoretical perspectives that have become prejudices decisively influenced their action. One must only think of the effects that the concept of the exploitation of the worker by the business-owner, and the further interpretation that has been drawn from it, that the owner is merely a parasite, economically entirely superfluous, and factually only lives as if off theft from the workers and their strength, has had on the behaviour of many workers. Those among whom this conception spread with dogmatic force, who took it up as an axiom into themselves, will be up for many actions that in other cases would seem nonsensical, if not immoral to them. And likewise the theoretical conception of the significance of the state and the position of the working class within the state has exerted a very substantial influence on the political behaviour of large masses.

The political significance of the conception of what the state is, what role it fulfils, what significance is inherent in it, the significance of this conception—which ultimately if not also consciously to everyone is rooted in theories—for political life is by no means small. On the basis of a certain conception of the state, a hostile attitude towards it is adopted, which under some circumstances, since the state is not so quickly to be abolished, leads to very flawed measures or to the neglectful omission of necessary actions, just as on the other hand a countervailing conception, an excessive cult of the state, can again mislead people to make common cause with parties that in fact not only have a fundamentally deprecatory stance towards their endeavours, but would, if they came to power, place greater barriers in their way than any other party. Now, in the socialist movement we come upon conceptions of the state that are nearly diametrically opposed to one another: a friendly one, which rises to the level of the cult of the state, and a hostile, critical one, which goes as far as direct enmity towards it. In many shades we see these opposing conceptions running through the intellectual history of socialism.

But what even is the state at all? This much is in any case clear, that if we speak of the state, we must first and foremost come to an understanding about what we mean by it. Now that is also not entirely a simple

matter. The political-scientific conceptions of the state diverge very far from one another, as anyone will find who consults the relevant literature. A political scientist who is a friend of mine once said: I have read 18 different books on theory of the state, and in all of them I found different definitions of the state. However, there are nonetheless fundamental features of the state. Decisive for it is first of all: It is a large community [*Gemeinwesen*], which stretches its dominion far beyond a single locale. For if we let the Greek city-states, as this name already shows, count as states, then we all know that, e.g., Athens ruled the countryside of Attica, Sparta that of Lacedaemonia. The state is a community on a certain, more-or-less extensive territory. The moment of the territory is decisive for the state. Where there is no territory, there is no state. The term "state within a state" is hence only to be understood figuratively. A community in a territory that extends beyond a single locality, which has common laws and exercises the highest authority [*höchste Gewalt*] through certain organs, that is, on this all definitions agree, in substance the state. For "highest authority" the expression "sovereignty [*Souveränität*]" is frequently used; but sovereignty as absolute legal supremacy [*Rechtshoheit*] is not an unconditionally-necessary attribute of the state. One should recall: We had in the German Reich before the Revolution individual states, whose character of statehood was not disputed, yet which were not in all matters sovereign. Above them stood the Reich, which in a whole series of important questions exercised the highest authority. And that was not only the case in Germany, we can also name other countries where the same relationship existed and still exists. There exists an aspiration—and the first steps towards this are already here—to create a power that is supposed to stand above all the states today and restrict their sovereignty in certain points, which would thus constitute a supra-state state [*überstaatlicher Staat*]. What this is meant to do, was already present before the war to a certain degree in international law [*internationales Gesetz*], which in Germany is called with a completely incorrect application of concepts *Völkerrecht* [law of peoples].[1] But this international law was not the law of a state, it came into being on the basis of agreements between states, which in their full freedom obligated themselves to abide by them. In the vote on new statutes, a single state could through its no vote prevent their elevation to international law. In this way, the connection was too loose for one to have been able to apply to it the description of a supra-state [*Überstaat*]. Of measures to reach a power that would justify it, is above all to be mentioned the creation of the Hague Court of Arbitration, and

it came close to a situation where at a third conference in the Hague this Court of Arbitration would have been granted such a nature by force of which it would have constituted a power above the states. The war prevented this, but what it brought in, that association of nations that one in Germany strangely calls the *Völkerbund* [League of Peoples], whereas it in fact so far is only a League of Nations [*Bund der Nationen*], a League of Governments, not already a League of Peoples itself—hence the French say *Société des Nations*, the English say *Society of Nations*, and in other languages it is something similar—was variously planned as an organism that was supposed to stand above the states and in certain questions simply limit their sovereignty, without for that reason their having ceased to be states. For that reason I say: absolute sovereignty is not an unconditional feature of the state; but it is a feature of the state, that over the territory that it encompasses it exercises the highest authority.

After these remarks, let us come to the antagonistic theories or conceptions among socialists about their stance towards the state. To begin with opposition to the state, opposition which goes as far as enmity, then this is the consequence, and indeed the extreme consequence, of the struggle against the paternalist state that emerged from the Middle Ages, the absolute, almost everywhere the monarchist-police state [*monarchistisch-polizistischer Staat*]. This opposition to the state, which in the eighteenth century—actually even earlier—gains stronger representation, stronger support, is the theoretical reflection of the great liberal movement that asserted itself in England quite particularly strongly in the economic domain, but also in politics, and whose renowned leading spokesman there was the Scottish philosopher and political economist Adam Smith. In France, the liberalism that wanted to limit the state's functions found its theorist in the physiocrat Quesnay and its most significant political champion in the statesman R.-J. Turgot, and in Germany it is represented at the start of the nineteenth century by Wilhelm von Humboldt.[2] Of socialists who wanted to abolish the state are above all to be mentioned the Frenchmen Charles Fourier and his school, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, of whom it is questionable whether one can rightfully call him an anarchist, but who in any case was theoretically an opponent of the state.[3] In Germany, one opponent of the state was the imaginative author of the book *The Ego and Its Own*, Kaspar Schmidt, who wrote under the pseudonym Max Stirner, and in Russia it was Mikhail Bakunin and later Peter Kropotkin.[4] Of Englishmen could be named William Godwin, the

author of the book about political justice. These are the best-known socialist opponents of the state.[5]

For its part, the cult of the state has two roots; the first is the revolt against the domination of money [*Geldherrschaft*], the opposition to the rule of the finance bourgeoisie. This was strong especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and oriented itself tendentiously against the societal class that among us one also calls the "upper bourgeoisie [*Großbourgeoisie*]". Politically, it found its strongest representation in the Jacobin movement of the French Revolution. The Jacobins were in favour of state omnipotence, of advocating the greatest power for the state that one can imagine. The demand for the protection of the people by a strong state incidentally had its precursor in the late Middle Ages in the struggle of the bourgeoisie [*Bürgertum*] against the feudal lords. The then-upcoming class, precisely the bourgeoisie, called on the central authority for support against the feudal nobility, just as later the wider bourgeoisie called on that state against the finance nobility, the finance aristocracy. A different cult of the state develops out of the opposition to rule by the masses. I am deliberately using the word "mass", others speak of "mob rule [*Pöbelherrschaft*]", *ochlocracy* as the Greek term goes. This cult appears especially in the wake of revolutions, after the mass temporarily takes the leading role on the public stage, exercises a kind of rule, and has destructive effects. It is an intellectual counter-movement to the revolution, which wants to strengthen the state against democracy. A counter-current, which in France at first led to Bonapartism, which was a mixture—one can also say: a bastardisation—of Jacobin and autocratic aspirations; but further, since Bonapartism, to use the phrase of a well-known Prussian monarch, "was afflicted with the licentious stench of revolution", culminated in the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy.[6] From this side, the cult of the state—as, e.g., the early Romantic literature shows—was a product of a reactionary spirit, which of course did not always appear exactly in a politically reactionary manner, but sees the protection against anarchic conditions only in a strong monarchist state. This phenomenon one also had in England in the epoch of the great revolution of the seventeenth century. There, the great philosopher Thomas Hobbes, the author of *Leviathan*, was the representative of the theory of absolute rule by the state, albeit in his case not necessarily in a monarchist sense. He conceded: The sovereignty of the state can also be exercised by a parliament or by a similar authority [*Instanz*]; but this must have absolute power, and this

would be best represented by monarchy. In Italy too this idea had its representatives.

Now, there is—if we want to look past these conservative, Romantic-regressively-oriented theories—also a democratic theory that wants to confer complete political power [*politische Allmacht*] on the state. In France, it had its classic philosopher in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Democracy is not always identical with liberalism. For a long time, its dominating idea is oppression, albeit oppression of the upper *strata*, whereas liberalism only wants to have an emancipatory effect. The democratic theory of the state that had its theorist in Rousseau found its practitioner [*Praktiker*] in Robespierre—Robespierre was a great venerator of Rousseau, and the Terror is dominated by lines of thought from Rousseau's writings—and comes to freedom through terrorist measures.[7] That the Jacobins were adherents of state omnipotence was already shown above, and from the Jacobins a direct line leads to Gracchus Babeuf, the intellectual originator and leader of the Conspiracy of the Equals, who likewise was a supporter of the democratic state in its most extreme interpretation. In Germany, we have above all to name our great philosopher Fichte as the preacher of the strong state, who in general in my opinion was still far more strongly influenced by the French Revolution than one commonly assumes.[8] This emerges from many of his writings. In his oft-cited work about *The Closed Commercial State*, which appeared in 1800, one finds many points of commonality with Babeuf. I do not know whether Fichte had read more closely about him or otherwise knew passages by him; but he certainly engaged in detail with the literature of the French Revolution. Then we have the more metaphysical theories of the German philosophers Hegel and Schelling about the state, the entirely conservative-Romantic state theories of de Bonald, Gentz, etc.[9]

If we now come to the socialist devotees of the state, then its classic representative in Germany is Ferdinand Lassalle. He is an unconditional supporter of the state, and specifically he is so as a student of Hegel, and was also strongly influenced on this point by Fichte, just as one is sometimes unsure whether it is more Hegel or Fichte who speaks out of Lassalle. After all, one knows what high admiration Lassalle felt for Fichte, and in many of his writings he championed his idea of the state with extraordinary energy. Very significantly already in the *Workers' Programme*, the address that he held in 1862 in northern Berlin at a workers' gathering about "the connection of the idea of the workers' estate with our contemporary time-period". In this lecture, which I have already cited before, he

exalts in ardent words a conception of the state that he calls the "fourth estate's idea of the state", incidentally an incorrect way of expressing it, since in fact he means the idea of the state of the modern working class. Despite this and other similar *faux-pas*, which are rooted in Lassalle's juristic way of thinking, the work is to be included among the classic landmarks in the literature of socialism, and namely it is classic for one because of its wealth of ideas and the extraordinarily clear development of these ideas, but also classic because of the great influence that it has had in the history of socialism. Now, in this work, Lassalle, where he talks about the state, initially comes up with the idea of speaking about the bourgeoisie's idea of the state. At the time, in Germany there was a very strong liberalism, which indeed everywhere in the 1860s was celebrating an extraordinary new lease of life, but which was still tainted with a certain naïve freshness, and was also asserted fairly radically by its leading spokespeople at the time. A liberalism that still had to contend with the residues of the old absolutist police state, and—as always happens with such conflicts—went somewhat overboard. Literary representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie explained that the state was essentially only there to protect property and person, but everything else had to be left to the free play of economic forces, which given the social power relations and the division of property at the time in practice simply meant sanctioning the rule of the bourgeoisie. Now this idea, that the state was only there to protect property and the person, is mocked by Lassalle as a "nightwatchman idea", because it reduces the state to the function of a nightwatchman instead of allowing it the functions that befit it in accordance with its role in history. Completely different is the working class's conception or idea of the state, that is, the state idea that according to Lassalle the working class will develop as a result of its societal situation. Let us hear his most notable passages about this. First it reads:

> Quite differently, gentlemen, does the fourth estate conceive of the state's purpose, and indeed it conceives of it in the way that it is constituted in reality.[10]

What Lassalle says here about the "fourth estate" probably only a few of his listeners from the working class will already truly have felt. He imputes to the working class the conception that in his view had to become the idea of the working class, and which to a wide degree it also really became. He continues:

> History, gentlemen, is a struggle with nature, with misery, ignorance, poverty, powerlessness, and thereby with unfreedom of all kinds, in which we found ourselves when the human race appeared at the start of history. The progressive defeat of this powerlessness—that is the development of freedom that history represents.
>
> In this struggle, we would never have taken a step forwards, or would ever take another one, if we had waged or wanted to wage it as individuals, everyone for themselves alone.
>
> It is the state that has the function of completing this development of freedom, this development of humanity towards freedom.
>
> The state is this unity of individual persons into an ethical whole, a unity that multiples a millionfold the forces of all the individuals who are included in this union, reproduces a millionfold the forces that would stand at their disposal to them all as individuals.
>
> So the purpose of the state is not that of only protecting the individual's personal freedom and property, with which they, according to the idea of the bourgeoisie, allegedly already enter into the state; the purpose of the state is precisely that of through this union putting the individuals into the position of reaching such purposes, such a stage of existence, that they as individuals could never reach, of enabling them to attain a *summa* of education, power, and freedom that would be simply unscalable for them all as individuals.
>
> With that, the purpose of the state is to bring the human being to positive unfolding and progressive development, in other words, to shape human destiny, i.e., the culture of which humanity is capable, to real existence; it is the education and development of humanity towards freedom.[11]

Here he thinks entirely along the same lines as Fichte, and in this representation, which reads so fluently, in this classically compact apposition of ideas, it is almost unique in the socialist literature. Lassalle then goes on to show what the state would be and do under the rule—he does not say: of the workers' estate, rather he says: under the rule of the *idea* of the workers' estate. He then says:

> This is the actually ethical nature of the state, gentlemen, its true and higher task. It is this so much that for this reason, since time immemorial, through the compulsion of things themselves, it was more or less performed by the state, even without its will, even unconsciously.[12]

And further it reads:

> So a state that is placed under the rule of the idea of the workers' estate would no longer, as of course all states hitherto have also already been, be driven by the nature of things and the compulsion of circumstances unconsciously and often even unwillingly; instead, it would make with the highest clarity and complete consciousness this ethical nature of the state its task. It would complete with free inclination and the most perfect consistency what hitherto was only wrested piecemeal from a reluctant will in the scantiest outlines, and thus it would precisely thereby necessarily—even if the time also no longer permits me to elucidate to you the detailed nature of this necessary connection—bring about a revival of the spirit, the development of a *summa* of fortune, education, well-being, and freedom, that is without parallel in world history, and compared to which even the most highly-lauded conditions in earlier times retreat into a pale shadow.
>
> It is this, gentlemen, that must be called the state idea of the workers' estate, its conception of the state's purpose, which, as you see, is just as different, and quite appropriately so, from the conception of the state's purpose among the bourgeoisie, as the principle of the workers' state of the share of all in the determination of the state's will or the general franchise, is from the relevant principle of the bourgeoisie, namely the census.[13]

The state as the force that, whether it wishes to or not, serves progress, that is Lassalle's socialist theory of the state. He delivers it to the workers as their own, in order to win them over to it. And in the face of the great clarity of his language, it becomes superfluous to offer any further comment on his line of thought here as well. In later speeches, Lassalle comes repeatedly back to it. This especially in the trials in which he was caught up after this lecture, even though it was held in so extraordinarily moderate a tone, in which he took care not to incite violence with a single word. But when he let it appear in writing, it was confiscated at the behest of the state prosecutor Schelling, one of the sons of the philosopher Schelling, and Lassalle was brought before the court, specifically under the accusation of having infringed §100 of the old Prussian Penal Code, the so-called Hatred and Contempt Clause [*Hass- und Verachtungsparagraph*]. That was a proper dummy paragraph, under which everything possible could be brought. It read:

> Whoever shall stir up population classes to hatred and contempt towards one another through any writings or speeches shall be punished.

The prosecution led to two very significant trials, in which Lassalle held the famous speeches: "Science and the Workers" and "The Indirect Tax and the Situation of the Working Classes". In the latter of these defence speeches, which were held in summer 1862, Lassalle develops once again his distinction between the working class's and the bourgeoisie's ideas of the state. With reference to a statement by the highly-regarded philosopher and philologist August Boeckh, he calls the latter idea of the state "modern barbarism", and then says:

> *The age-old vestal flame of all civilisation, the state, I defend together with you* (namely the judges) *against those* (the liberal) *barbarians.*[14]

That is the state according to the theory of Ferdinand Lassalle. It is quite different according to the socialist theory that was founded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. There, the state plays a substantially different role. In Marx's older writings and essays, which he wrote at the start of the 1840s, he reveals himself to be mostly still a supporter of the state, influenced by Hegel's theory, even if he already goes well beyond Hegel. But after he turned towards the communist movement, studied it in France and likewise had oriented himself based on the conditions in England, there emerges with him and Engels—whom we must always name together, since they from then on worked together, showed each other their work, so that with many of the works they have now authored one cannot say that one or the other of them is the author—in the socialist theory elaborated by them there is expressed a completely different conception of the state. One can call it a *critical* idea of the state, which has nothing in common with Lassalle's reverence for the state. Already in the work that Marx and Engels called *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and which was written in winter 1847, the state plays a role. At the end there, it reads:

> The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.[15]

Following this, the various measures are briefly enumerated that would be drawn up for this purpose, and then it reads in the conclusion:

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.
>
> In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.[16]

Here the word "state" is completely, and one may assume deliberately, avoided. The proletariat takes over state power, seizes from the bourgeoisie all the means of economic and political power, uses them in its own vein, and after this has happened, there emerges a great general association. There is no talk of a state anymore.

In Marx and Engels' later writings, this stance towards the state is expressed even more sharply. After the defeat of the '48 Revolution, they lived banned in exile in London. When in the 1860s the workers' movement rebuilt itself again, they did not take a direct part in the German movement. But they had political friends in it, with whom they maintained a correspondence by letters, and they also sought through essays and writings to have an educative effect on the movement. One of these friends was Wilhelm Liebknecht, and the faction headed by him and August Bebel counted for a long time in Germany as in fact the party of Marx. But naturally, in the organs that Wilhelm Liebknecht edited at the time were expressed overwhelmingly the ideas of Liebknecht, which it was already mentioned were strongly influenced by French socialism, so that Liebknecht was entirely erroneously taken to be the theoretical mouthpiece of Marx. Liebknecht gave the paper that was founded in 1869 by the Social-Democratic Workers' Party [*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*], created under his intellectual leadership, and which he edited, the name *Der Volksstaat*, and he like others spoke in it also again and again about such a "people's state". But that was not remotely to Marx and Engels' taste at all, and in the work *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, written by him in 1876–1877 with the partial

contribution of Marx, Engels took the opportunity to polemicise against this idea of the people's state, as Liebknecht represented it, without naming him directly. He explains that after the revolution of the proletariat, development would lead not towards a people's state, but towards the dissolution, the withering-away of the state. The chapters of the work that specifically deal with socialism were later issued by Engels as a pamphlet with the title *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and whoever prefers not to read the entire book, which contains exceedingly valuable discussions of foundational questions of philosophy, ethics, historical science, political economy, and social science, should at least acquire this pamphlet. One could not wish for a better demonstration of the fundamental ideas of Marx–Engels' social theory. Now, in this work, towards the end, Engels gives a summarising discussion about what will become of the state, according to the viewpoint represented by Marx and him, after the working class has attained political power once the development of capitalist society has reached its highest point. He writes there:

> *The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into State property.*
>
> But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the State as State. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the State. That is, of an organisation of the particular class which was *pro tempore* the exploiting class, an organisation for the purpose of preventing any interference from without with the existing conditions of production, and therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labour). The State was the official representative of society as a whole; the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the State of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole; in ancient times, the State of slave-owning citizens; in the middle ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a State, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the State really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—this is, at the same time, its last

> independent act as a State. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The State is not "abolished". *It dies out.* This gives the measure of the value of the phrase "a free State", both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists for the abolition of the State out of hand.[17]

One sees, the state is fundamentally only allotted a transitional, temporary role, which is essentially that of a repressive or suppressive force—so what Lassalle precisely calls the role of a nightwatchman for the respective ruling class, and if along with the continued existence of various societal classes, class contradictions and the occasion for the suppression of classes cease, according to this theory the state ceases to exist as well. This runs through all the writings of Marx and Engels and was later more closely justified by the latter in the work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Occasionally, Engels also speaks of the state as a product of the division of labour in society, and the leading organ of the administrative tasks that have become necessary because of it, but he does not go further into these functions and their future, but rather only ever deploys the state as an afterthought as an organ of suppression. Inhowfar this conception can be sustained, or which of the two conceptions, the Marxian–Engelsian or the Lassallean, which periodically played a major role in the discussions among socialists, has a claim to greater accuracy, will perhaps be shown if we now also listen to Marx himself about the state.

Fourteen years before Engels' work about *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* appeared, in 1871, Karl Marx expressed himself more precisely about the state in the memorandum or address prepared for the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association about the Paris Commune of 1871. In the third section of this work, he explains what the Commune of Paris actually signified, what its deeper meaning and its deeper intentions had been. In this—and I do not want to conceal this—he acted somewhat cavalierly. He cloaked what the people of the Commune vaguely had in mind in very clear and definite language, in the logical development of a guiding idea. After he argued that the Paris Commune was a government of the working class, and had broken with the institutions of old class rule, with the military, police, etc., he continues:

> The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The communal *régime* once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralised Government would in the provinces, too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers. In a rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandate impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents. The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally mis-stated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents. The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre- eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture.[18]

These arguments lie intellectually in curious agreement with the plan that Proudhon, whom Marx so harshly criticised, developed in his treatise about federalism and his work *On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes*. The latter work, which one can call Proudhon's political testament, has never been translated into German. It was written towards the end of 1864, when the International Workingmen's Association was in the process of being formed, and among the workers of Paris a new political

life was stirring. With it, Proudhon, who was already at death's door, wanted to give the movement a kind of political guidebook. He was, as one knows, an opponent of the state, even if he was not an anarchist in the sense in which one understands the word today, but rather paid homage to federalism and communalism. The state should be abolished through the nation organising itself from the bottom up federally in free communes and associations of these. Here, the state is—which under France's imperial régime was understandable enough—only conceived as a repressive power. Just as seven years later in Marx, who calls it a parasitical growth, excrescence of society, and repressive force. Of a higher task or function of the state there is as little talk in Marx as in Proudhon, whereas according to Lassalle the state still fulfilled a higher cultural task even if it did not want to do so at all in the first place. Where is the truth here? In my view, the plan developed by Marx completely misrecognises the effect of the great economic contexts, which in a man such as Marx, who had so great a sense for the nature and the significance of large-scale production, must be quite particularly amazing. The conception developed here is completely petty-bourgeois. A community with petty-bourgeois economy and petty-bourgeois intercourse can be conceived along the lines of communalism if need be. But a country with modern industrial firms and the economic-social contexts created by them, which reach far beyond the municipality, is unthinkable as a mere league of independent communes.

For instance, one should only remind oneself of the many branches of modern transportation and the many other economic organisms whose sphere of impact and needs make necessary compulsory legislation that may not find any stumbling blocks in the self-determination of municipalities. The economic intercourse created by large industry places the legislation of the nation before completely different tasks than could be sufficiently carried out in a communist organisation. The latter would already fail simply at the requirements of a rational river economy, in which the local interests are so different. The residents in the valley and at the estuary have completely different interests to the inhabitants of the mountain regions from which the river flows. In many cases, rivers are silted up because the population of the relevant mountain districts deforested the woods. The rivers, unhemmed from their springs onwards in their course, took so much soil with them that further down, riverbeds and estuaries silted up. A river economy that keeps the river navigable needs laws and supervision that does not stop short of any special interests or even moods of the municipalities. After all, we have even international supervisory

commissions for the courses of the Danube, Rhine, etc. Now, one likes to refer to the latter as proofs that such matters can be regulated by way of free agreements. But one forgets thereby that these commissions are underpinned by treaties between *states*, in which already the special interests of municipalities and districts have had to cede to a greater general interest. If states had not already existed, those agreements would never have come about.

The plan of communalism ignores many of the significant legislative and administrative tasks of the modern state; and incidentally, municipalities also today cannot limit themselves to the petty-bourgeois tasks that Proudhon had in mind. Land policy, transport policy, and social policy have with many of them already outgrown this framework. I may recall what I myself wrote now almost 25 years ago in an article entitled "The Social-Political Significance of Space and Number".[19] It is shown there how much spatial extent of territory and population increase alone already create entirely new needs and the coming-into-being of legislation, how its tasks become more complicated.

One will experience this in practice in Germany if attempts are made here to implement direct legislation, which has been fundamentally taken up into the Reich Constitution of the Republic, in reality. The referendum, which is at home in Switzerland, has its unpleasant, unpredictable aspects there too. But it is something completely different if the citizens of the small Confederation, which has been republican since forever, vote on a question pertaining to their country, which is geopolitically secured, than if such a popular referendum is undertaken in a country with over 60 million inhabitants and in so difficult a situation as Germany. One can perhaps regulate very simple questions with the direct vote, but one cannot possibly bring all the affairs of a major country to a decision through such votes, otherwise every citizen would have to be a paragon of encyclopaedic knowledge.

The state is not just an organ of repression and manager [*Besorger*] of the affairs of property-owners. To let it only appear as such is the recourse of all anarchist system-builders; Proudhon, Bakunin, Stirner, Kropotkin, all of them have only ever presented the state as an organ of repression and leeching [*Aussaugung*], which it certainly was for long enough, but must not by any means necessarily be at all. It is a form of coexistence and an organ of government, which changes its social-political character along with its social content. Whoever after the way of an abstracting nominalism combines its concept immutably with the concept of the ruling

conditions under which it once emerged, ignores the possibilities for development and the actual metamorphoses that have taken place with it in history.

In practice, under the influence of the struggles of the workers' movement, another assessment of the state has embedded itself in social-democratic parties. There, in fact, the idea of a people's state has gained ground, which is not the tool of the upper classes and *strata*, but receives its character by force of the general and equal franchise for the great majority of the people. Insofar, Lassalle remained right in the face of history, insofar as we can overview it, despite several exaggerations in his statements, reproduced above. All the same, one must take him too with a pinch of salt. In his open response he asks the workers: "But what even is the state?" And after providing statistical figures about the distribution of income at the time, he continues:

> So to you, the *destitute classes*, not to us, the higher *strata*, belongs the state, for *it consists of you*, yours, *the great association of the poorer classes*, *that is the state*!"[20]

A statement that bears much similarity to the statement of a French socialist, of whom in his day it was suggested that Lassalle copied him, although this is not correct. This is Louis Blanc, the author of the work on *The Organisation of Labour*. In an essay that was polemically directed against Proudhon, he wrote:

> In a democratic system of government, the state is the power of the whole people, represented by its deputies, it is the rule of freedom. The state is nothing other than society itself, which acts as society to prevent oppression and maintain freedom. "Man of the people, the state is you!—*Homme du peuple, l'état c'est vous*!"[21]

The exhortation at the end is indeed almost the same that Lassalle utters. And their argument runs in a similar way: The state is composed of the people, consequently the people *is* the state. In this respect, one can certainly argue in a somewhat less simplistic way. Even by establishing which people the population of the state consists of, the state is not yet explained. Only under certain circumstances does the word have a true content. Let us hear another socialist about this. The English socialist

James Ramsay MacDonald published a very interesting treatise in 1909 on *Socialism and Government*. In it he argues *contra* Engels:

> [T]he State […] is not the Government; […]; and, on the other hand, it is not Society. It is the organised political personality of a sovereign people—the organisation of a community for making its common will effectual by political methods. … It is, therefore, a mistake to assume that the State is only what the individuals in it have made it. The past has also made it. … Hence, the State organisation should be regarded as being of an organic type.[22]

That is, I believe, the definition of the concept of the "state" that will also permanently continue to endure in the face of unbiased historical examination. One cannot criticise MacDonald for leaving out any essential moment whatsoever that comes into consideration with the state. There has now been an entire literature about the state, about whether the state rests on a contract, be that on a conscious or a tacit contract, which part of the population simply enters into through acquiescence, or whether the state only derives from violence. And, one asked further, what is the community's will? Is it the will of all those who form a community, added together, or is there a stronger potentiality at work in its formation? The latter is, sofar as one is justified in speaking of a communal will at all, in fact the case. And in fact it is no mystical, transcendental power, but quite simply history, the past, that contributes to its formation, and not merely the respective vote of a number of people. The state is a product of development, in whose respective formation the past plays a shared role. To exit the state is an impossibility. One can only change it. And so the question of the socialists' state leads onto the question about democracy and government in general.

Notes

1. See Marius S. Ostrowski (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein on Social Democracy and International Politics: Essays and Other Writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
2. Friedrich Wilhelm Christian Carl Ferdinand von Humboldt (1767–1835), Prussian statesman, author, cultural and linguistic theorist, and educational reformer.
3. Present volume, pp. 249–320 *passim*, 469–88.

4. Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814–1876), Russian revolutionary activist and collectivist anarchist political theorist, leader of the anti-Marxist faction within the International Workingmen's Association, oversaw the split between anarchism and communism/socialism. Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921), Russian revolutionary activist, economist, historian, sociologist, biologist, and geographer, the seminal figure in anarcho-communist political philosophy.
5. William Godwin (1756–1836), English journalist, novelist, historian, and political philosopher, one of the earliest advocates of utilitarianism and anarchism.
6. Bonapartism, originally a political ideology of conservative monarchism and imperialism associated with French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), later used more generally for a political movement based on authoritarian centralisation, anti-elitism, militarism, and radical populism.
7. Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre (1758–1794), French lawyer and politician, leading member of the Jacobin faction in the French Revolution, perpetrator of the Reign of Terror against the right (Girondist), left (Hébertist), and centrist (Dantonist) opposition.
8. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), German philosopher, leading figure in German idealism and early theorist of German nationalism.
9. Louis Gabriel Ambroise, vicomte de Bonald (1754–1840), French philosopher and counter-revolutionary politician, early contributor to sociological theory. Friedrich von Gentz (1764–1832), German conservative diplomat and writer, advocate of constitutional monarchy. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854), German philosopher, intermediary figure in German idealism between Fichte and Hegel.
10. Friedrich Lassalle, 'Das Arbeiterprogramm', in Friedrich Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, vol. 2*, Eduard Bernstein (ed.) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), p. 196.
11. Ibid., pp. 196–8.
12. Ibid., p. 198.
13. Ibid., pp. 198–9.
14. Ferdinand Lassalle, 'Die indirekte Steuer und die Lage der arbeitenden Klassen', in Ferdinand Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, vol. 2*, Eduard Bernstein (ed.) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), p. 485. August Boeckh (1785–1867), German Classical philologist and ancient historian.
15. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 504.
16. Ibid., pp. 505–6.

17. Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–1883* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), pp. 320–1.
18. Karl Marx, '*The Civil War in France*: Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870–1871* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), pp. 332–3.
19. [Ed. B.—Reprinted in volume II of the collected work *On the Theory and History of Socialism*. Berlin 1904, fourth edition.] Eduard Bernstein, '5. The Social and Political Significance of Space and Number, *Neue Zeit*, 14 and 21 April 1897', in Henry Tudor and J.M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 83–98.
20. Ferdinand Lassalle, 'Offenes Antwortschreiben an das Zentralkomitee zur Berufung eines allgemeinen deutschen Arbeiterkongresses zu Leipzig', in Friedrich Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, vol. 3*, Eduard Bernstein (ed.) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), pp. 80–1.
21. Louis Blanc, "Hommes du peuple, l'État, c'est vous! Réponse au citoyen Proudhon", *Le Nouveau Monde* 11 (15 November 1849).
22. [In the same vein it reads in the aforementioned article by the author of this work: "Just as in the zoological world the formation of a skeleton becomes an unavoidable necessity as the differentiation of functions advances, so also in the life of a society the differentiation of the economy brings with it the need to develop an *administrative body* which will represent the interests of society as such. Such a body was, and still is, the *state*. Clearly, the further development of production *cannot* proceed by the *abolition* of differentiated production but only by *new combinations* on the basis of the differentiation already achieved. Similarly with human beings. Progress lies, not in abolishing the occupational division of labour, but in *completing the process*, and the administrative body of society in the foreseeable future will differ only in degree from the state as we now know it." (Ed. Bernstein, *On the Theory and History of Socialism*, Berlin 1904, vol. II, p. 73.)] Bernstein, 'Social and Political Significance', p. 93; J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism and Government, vol. 1* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1909), pp. 3–6.

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CHAPTER 9

Socialism as Democracy and Parliamentarism

The socialist movement of necessity a democratic movement—The concept of parliamentarism—Parliamentarism in history—The power of the purse, the fundamental right of parliaments—Crown and parliament—The excesses of parliamentarism—Wilhelm Liebknecht's opposition to participation in parliament—Friedrich Engels' appraisal of parliamentary action—The qualitative increase in parliamentary work—The dispute over budget approvals—The dispute over participation in the government: Jean Jaurès and August Bebel—The Amsterdam resolution—The dispute over the approval of war credits—Self-administration as the corrective to parliamentarism.

Let us hold onto the idea that socialism in our time, as a class movement, is a movement of the working class. Of course, it is not only a class movement, but also a movement of socialist ideology. But the member of another societal class must, as the case may be, *forget* their class interest, or *defy* it, in order to become a socialist. But the worker, that is at least the view of socialists, needs only to *recognise* their class interest—not their personal interest, that can be something else—in order to become a socialist. Since thereby the socialist movement is the movement of the working class, of the broad social lower *stratum* of society, it is for that reason already necessarily a democratic movement. About this there can fundamentally be no difference of opinions at all, but only about how this democracy operates, by what route and towards which goal. Dispute prevails initially about its form, and there the question of democracy touches on the question of parliamentarism. Repeatedly, by socialists as well as by

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radical bourgeois democrats, a fundamental contradiction has already been claimed to exist between democracy and parliamentarism. And today one can read in the organs of the socialist tendency that calls itself communist the proposition established as an axiom by the Bolshevist government of Soviet Russia: "Parliamentarism is the form of government of the bourgeoisie." By contrast, we know that both Marx–Engels as well as Lassalle spoke out in favour of parliamentarism, when it was a matter of the struggle over the power of the purse [*Budgetrecht*], the right of parliaments to grant moneys [*Geldbewilligung*] vis-à-vis semi-absolutist monarchical governments. And today, the great majority of socialists who are not Bolshevist communists support parliamentary government. It is hence necessary to be clear about what we have to understand by parliamentarism and parliamentary government.

Let us begin with a determination of concepts. What even is a parliament at all? The question is to be answered precisely in this way: A parliament is a consulting [*beratend*] and respectively also a decision-making [*beschließend*] representative body [*Vertretungskörper*]; expressed differently, it is a representing [*vertretend*], or specifically a re-presentative [*repräsentative*] assembly [*Versammlung*], which consults and as the case may be also passes decisive resolutions. Representation and consultation are not to be separated from the concept of parliamentarism, more so is decision-making. There have been parliaments that did not have the right to take decisions. In the early times of parliamentary development in England, there were such parliamentary bodies there. The Consular constitution of France, which was elaborated by Sieyès, and which later became the constitution of the Empire, provided for various parliamentary bodies: Senate, Tribunal, etc.[1] The Tribunal thereby had only a consultative function, not decision-making capacity. It had to consult on laws and, as the case may be, to present them to the legislative body; but it did not have decisive powers. This idea Sieyès had taken from the oligarchic Venetian Republic, and one finds similar ideas laid down in the bourgeois utopia *Oceana* by James Harrington, which is interesting in several respects for the intellectual history of parliamentarism. Harrington proposed two bodies, one consultative, one decision-making. But there the democratically-elected body should be the decision-making one, and the body constituted under a limited franchise should only have a consultative function. This consultative body, which essentially represented the propertied classes, was supposed to debate laws in advance, and then the people should decide on them through its representatives. One can say that

this is falsified [*verfälscht*] parliamentarism. But that is not what it comes down to here. In the history of parliamentarism, there have been many half-measures and hybrid forms. English parliamentarism too was initially a hybrid, and it is still one even today in some respects. Firstly, it is not the unrestricted rule of parliament. For besides parliament there exists in England still the Crown, which according to the letter of the law still has very many rights, even if it does not make any use of most of them in practice. All the same, it has more rights than one commonly assumes. Then, the parliament in England still consists of two chambers, the House of Lords, which is still overwhelmingly composed of hereditary members, and the House of Commons, which in Germany one still oddly translates as "lower chamber [*Unterhaus*]", whereas in reality the "House of Commons" has far further-reaching rights than the House of Lords. Among the English people, only the elected representative body is indeed also generally regarded as Parliament. It is just the same in Germany. Already before the Revolution, the Prussian people regarded the *Abgeordnetenhaus* [House of Representatives] as the actual parliament; the *Herrenhaus* [House of Lords] it saw only as a kind of hindrance to parliamentary work, and after all it was not much more than that. In England one also does not call the House of Lords the first chamber, rather one describes it entirely logically as the second chamber.

These second chambers rest elsewhere too in many cases on hereditary right, or are composed of nominated and estatist [*ständisch*] representatives. Thus, the Prussian *Herrenhaus* was made up of representatives of the nobility, of landownership, certain inheritable families, the high clergy, the universities, the cities; it was hence an estatist representative body. In England, as I have remarked, members of the House of Lords even today are still for the most part persons of hereditary right, but this inherited entitlement to a seat in the House of Lords has an unpleasant side-effect. A man who is a hereditary peer of England may not be a representative in the House of Commons. The well-known liberal politician Lord Rosebery was a member of the House of Commons as long as his father was a member of the House of Lords.[2] But his father died very young, and then his son had to go into the House of Lords whether he wanted to or not, so that his career as a representative was over. He took that very badly, and declared the House of Lords to be a gilded cage. That he could not enter the House of Commons made it impossible for him to be Leader of the Liberal Party, so much is this the first chamber in England today.[3]

All the same, historically the hereditary or estatist chambers were initially the first. In England there first emerges the House of Lords in the thirteenth century. But very soon, the Lords include representatives of the counties and cities, because they need them, but these then convene separately as the House of Commons, and gradually this House of Commons gains ever more in importance vis-à-vis the House of Lords, until the centre of gravity lies completely with the widely- and directly-elected popular representative body [*Volksvertretung*]. That is the case today also where both chambers are elected, as it is now in France. There, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies are elected, but the Chamber of Deputies is elected on the basis of the general, equal, secret, and direct franchise, but the Senate indirectly by representatives of the municipalities, the general councils, and the *arrondissement* councils. In turn, in Switzerland one has the *Nationalrat* [National Council] and the *Ständerat* [Council of States]. The *Nationalrat* is elected in constituencies on the basis of the equal, direct franchise; the *Ständerat* is also directly elected, but by entire cantons. Each full canton despatches two representatives, every half-canton one, whereas the *Nationalrat* constituencies are divided according to population. As a result of this, the *Nationalrat* is far stronger in members than the *Ständerat*, and also exercises further-reaching functions. It is similar in the United States, where the Senate and the House of Representatives constitute the popular representative body, here called "Congress". The Senate is elected directly or indirectly by the states, the House of Representatives by the constituencies. But here just as in all other modern countries, the general and more directly-elected house is regarded as the actual parliament.

Now where the rights and tasks of parliaments are concerned, the fundamental right of a parliament is the power of the purse, the right of adopting or refusing public budgets, or specifically, taxes. Originally, in England the parliament was only summoned by the King at all when he needed new taxes, and the right to refuse these taxes was the means by which it obtained all other rights. Already under Henry IV in 1407, the House of Commons wins the right that all money-granting laws had to be put before it, and then it seized for itself the sole right to grant money. With the changing power relations in the state, in struggles taken up again and again against the Crown, it makes the most of the latter's difficulties. It knows all too well that without money, ruling is not possible. If it depends on the parliament for money grants, then the Crown cannot do anything without it; without money, it can procure no soldiers and hence

also wage no wars without the parliament. Relying on this, e.g., when in 1628 a war between France and England was imminent, Parliament reserved for itself the rights of the so-called Petition of Right. Twelve years later, in 1640, when Charles I, who was at the same time King of Scotland, wanted to fight against his upstart Scots, the English Parliament said in turn: "Before we authorise moneys for this, we first want to settle our scores with you." Charles, who for ten years had let taxes be collected without the approval of Parliament, had to acknowledge the unlawfulness of this proceeding, and withdraw a whole series of ordinances, authorise new rights, and sign a death warrant for his Chancellor Strafford before he had the money granted to him. Then came the Revolution which cost him his head, but which ended with the Restoration of the monarchy. But when in 1688 the second Revolution broke out, and William of Orange was called to the country, he too had first to confer new rights on Parliament before he could ascend the throne. In 1689, Parliament created the Mutiny Act with the caveat that it would only ever apply for a year, so that once it is not renewed, the soldiers in England may mutiny as they please without incurring punishment by doing so.[4] Through this, it was made impossible for the Crown to play off the Army against Parliament.

One can divide the history of the English Parliament, which after all was the first major parliament in any country, into two large phases; the *first phase* is that of the struggle by Parliament against the Kingship, i.e., the struggle for ever greater power for Parliament vis-à-vis the Crown. The line of succession was tied to a Protestant inheritance. Despite all that, the Crown still retained the possibility of great influence. In 1714, the House of Welf came to the throne. The first representative of the Hanoverian dynasty, George I, could not even speak English and cared little about the government, but was satisfied with coming to England from time to time and raking in his revenues. George II also only established himself in England with difficulty. It was different with George III. He wanted to be his own Chancellor, and then also fortunately managed to pull off going through both the rebellion and the secession of the United States of America. His attempts to push back the influence of Parliament only lasted a short time. In 1780, the House of Commons adopted a motion that the power of the Crown was growing and had to be curtailed, and that was also then achieved through a whole series of provisions.

But over the course of time, the House of Commons had become just as much a chamber of the privileged as the House of Lords. The franchise

was extraordinarily restricted, votes were public, and even if this situation had not been introduced through a reactionary law but had been handed down from the Middle Ages, where nobody thought of secret voting, it had still become the means of terrible electoral corruption, and led to vote-buying and the ordering-around of voters being practised with complete nonchalance.[5] Likewise, corruption grew in Parliament, which, the more England became a colonial empire, had ever more well-paid posts to dispense. And now begins the *second phase* of the history of English parliamentarism: the struggle for the *democratisation of the popular representative body*, and in association with this the struggle of the House of Commons *against the House of Lords*.

Until well into the nineteenth and even still into the twentieth century, the English franchise in general at first factually and then formally was a privileged franchise for landownership in the countryside and the city. Apart from the steadily more and more contracted entitlements to vote for city corporations, etc., it was always tied to disposal over land and landed property, and all the reforms to it were carried out in such a way that the concept of the landowner was incrementally expanded. First it was only the yeomen who had the right to vote, then they were joined by the tenants of hereditary leaseholds, later the middling and smaller tenants in general and the renters of residential homes—the English after all predominantly have single-family houses—and ultimately it was also lent to the renters of rooms and parts of these, so that whoever paid 10 marks rent per week was a voter, even if they only had half a room to their name. But a straightforward civic right the English franchise was not, right up to the world war. There, its development formally went ahead in the reverse way to how it did with us and elsewhere on the Continent. Here, the franchise was introduced as a civic right, but in many ways tied to certain tax payments, etc. By contrast, in England it was a right of the landowner or some corporation representative, and of course tied to English citizenship.[6]

We cannot go into the exceedingly characteristic struggles over electoral reform in England in this context. For the object we are dealing with here, it is worth remarking that along with the first great voting reform in the nineteenth century, the struggle against the powerful parliamentary position of the House of Lords is also placed on the agenda once again. This voting reform, which is wrung from the House of Lords, which for long time resisted it, in 1832, brought a crushing Liberal majority (486 Liberals against 172 Conservatives) into the House of Commons, and

with that effected a strong change in the relations of the two Houses of Parliament towards each other. Since the start of the eighteenth century, after the establishment of parliamentary rule, political dominion over England had fallen to the party of the Whigs and that of the Tories in alternation. Both were aristocratic parties, parties of the property-owners, fundamentally only two great alliances or coteries of nobles and members of the upper bourgeoisie. The political difference between them was not great. The Whigs were traditionally the party of a certain progressiveness, they wanted to be the party of viable novelty, and were the special trustees of the newly-rising bourgeoisie. The Tories, originally supporters of the Stuart dynasty, converted themselves into the so-called party of the institutions, of kingship in general, of the hereditary aristocracy, of the state church, of entrenched landownership, and so on. These were their contradictions in principle. In practice, they blurred together quite a lot, since after all in both parties the members of the upper *stratum* of property-owners played the decisive role, so that one day the verse appeared, which I believe has the poet Byron as its author:

> Strange that such difference should be
> Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Which one can express in German approximately as follows:

> *Ein mächt'ger Unterschied, Potz Blitz!*
> *Von Prudelwitz und Strudelwitz.*

In the second half of the eighteenth century, and in the first third of the nineteenth century, the two parties had somewhat balanced each other out in the House of Lords as well as the House of Commons, and if in the House of Commons the Whigs had a large majority and in the House of Lords the Tories did not want to yield, then the misalignment was changed by a so-called "batch of peers" [*Pairsschub*].[7] But after the great voting reform that ceases. In the House of Lords, so strong an exodus of Whigs into the camp of the Tories takes place that these ultimately attain a majority in it, in which a batch of peers could no longer change anything substantial, it would then have had to contain several hundred people, which was not to be carried out by a legal route. Towards the end of the century, it had already got to the point that the Tories—now called Conservatives—in the House of Lords numbered around 400 out of 500 members, and

the Liberals only about 100. This development took place after in 1866 the second voting reform had brought the franchise to great parts of the urban workers, and the Liberal Party had gradually become more radicalised through its coalition with the workers. Now the need was even more strongly felt among liberals and radicals to concentrate the weight of focus and political decision-making in the House of Commons. A great step in this direction was made already in 1861, when Gladstone pushed through the resolution that the House of Lords could not vote on individual measures in the state budget, but had to vote on it as a whole, whereby in practice it lost the ability to interfere in the budget at all, since for a party dedicated to preserving the state, as which the Conservatives wanted to be seen, the revolutionary means of rejecting the state budget for the sake of individual details is downright ruled out.[8]

Only once did the Lords even make something approaching an attempt to do so, and it went badly enough for them. In 1908, they rejected the then-Chancellor Lloyd George's budget with the justification that the tax law included in it was no mere taxation measure but instead a radical social transformation, which was also accurate to a certain degree.[9] This provoked vigorous political struggles, and made necessary several new elections, which took place in difficult circumstances for the Liberals as a result of the simultaneous struggle over Home Rule for Ireland, but still delivered them a majority, albeit not a large one. In 1911 a compromise was reached to the effect that, if a Parliament in the same legislative period passes the same bill three times with gaps of a year each, it then becomes law even against the will of the House of Lords. With that, in England the House of Commons definitively achieved supremacy. The House of Lords today has only a very limited function as a kind of revision chamber, and also hardly wants to be any more than that. It claims only the possibility of, as the case may be, being able to bring about a direct popular vote in the form of new elections, if it is of the opinion that the House of Commons has gone well beyond the mandate that it received at the last elections. Thus, the House of Commons today is almost sovereign. The influence of the Crown is only that of a mediating counsellor today, and can even in foreign policy achieve nothing against the express will of the House of Commons.

The English still cling to the monarchy for the following reasons: Firstly, for generations no bearer of the crown has let matters come to a conflict with Parliament. After all, they descended from foreign princely houses, and in the awareness of this, imposed all the greater restraint on

themselves. It has been calculated that Edward VII had only about one-seven-thousandth of English blood in his veins. The dynasty stems from Germany, and its princes almost always again married Germans. After all, Germany produced any number of eligible princesses. If one reads the names of the English princes and their titles, one will find that they are almost all German. There are Hanoverians, Brunswickers, Schleswigers, Coburgers, etc. That makes them unthreatening in domestic politics. By contrast, the bearer of the crown acts as a countervailing force to the dangers of the excesses of party rule. They represent an interest that stands above the special interests of the parties. Parties are always exposed to the danger, through their natural interest of self-preservation, of forgetting or even downright infringing general interests. Towards them, the bearer of the crown is protected from such impulses by the continuity of their office. This continuity gives them, as long as they behave with tact, great moral preponderance. They namely stand at the epicentre of foreign policy. To them come the reports of envoys, and it is they who nominate these envoys. Of course at the recommendation of the appropriate minister, and they cannot do anything against this ministry's will; they cannot even choose these ministers for themselves. When Gladstone defeated the Conservative Party in 1880 and the Liberals took the helm, Queen Victoria wanted him least of all the leaders of the Liberals as Prime Minister, for she hated in him the successful rival of Disraeli-Beaconsfield, whom she valued dearly.[10] She hence did all she could to get a different Liberal Prime Minister. But this proved to be impossible. All the Liberals who came into consideration and to whom she turned, explained to her once she undertook to ask them that it was impossible for them to form a ministry, and that she had to accept Gladstone, for the majority in Parliament wanted him. And Victoria submitted.

But in general, the nominations are run by the monarch, who thereby acquires an extraordinary knowledge of people [*Personenkenntnis*]. And they hitherto benefited from something else as well. So long as most of the governments on the Continent were still monarchies, they had personal connections to the relevant monarchs and their surroundings and hence special possibilities of gleaning information. If they were then a person of prudence and intelligence, like, e.g., Edward VII, whom one greatly underestimated in Germany before his ascent to the throne, then they can be of great service to their country and in fact be a valued counsellor to their ministers. Whether Edward VII was actually, as one believed about him here at the time, the instigator of Germany's encirclement before the

war, I will leave out of our discussion, especially since I am of the view that an encirclement in the sense assumed here did not take place at all. During the time of this so-called encirclement, Germany was doing perfectly well, and one could more plausibly say that Germany, i.e., its government at the time, actually encircled itself; but that is a secondary question. Viewed from the English perspective, Edward VII was a very successful helper in the peaceful settlement of his country's foreign entanglements, and his admirers bestowed on him the epithet "the peacemaker" after his death.

But the Crown is not a surefire means to counter the excesses of Parliament. The English stick by it because in their more recent history it has been put to the test, and the crowned heads of the latest generations were shrewd enough not to push themselves forward and only to make themselves heard in such cases where they truly knew that they had the nation behind them.

There are undoubtedly a series of dangers associated with parliamentary rule, as was already shown in England in the eighteenth century. The corruption of the Parliaments at the time, which had become proverbial, was introduced by the Whig minister Robert Walpole (1676–1745), who personally was himself completely clean, but who found buying people off and bribery for political reasons to be necessary.[11] Among his successors, the evil ate away about itself ever more widely. The more positions the government had to dispense—and in the colonial country of England there were ever more of them—the more generalised corruption became. A one-sided party rule existed for a long time that neglected the common interest; and many poorly-advised laws were also made. But in this it should not be concealed that personalist regimes did not acquit themselves better by so much as a hair's breadth in several ways. With them too, and with their associated mess of officialdom [*Beamtenwirtschaft*] one is exposed to all manner of hazards of fortune. However one may be fundamentally disposed towards the monarchic system of government, still nobody will dispute that in one very important moment that was fateful for the German people—for which reasons, I will not speak about here—in our time the crownbearer failed miserably. And no more than that can a hereditary or estatist chamber act as a countervailing means.

Yet now it is a fact that the worst excesses of parliamentary rule belong to a time where the parliament was a chamber of the privileged, elected on the basis of a restricted franchise. The English Parliament actually only ceased being a parliament of privilege in the final third of the nineteenth century. Until 1858, the representative still had to be a landowner in the

city or the countryside, and in fact they had to have quite a decent income from landownership. In France it was similar until 1848. In the great Revolution, after the fall of Robespierre, the franchise is incrementally narrowed, seemingly reestablished by Napoleon I but in fact grossly falsified, and the Chamber demeaned to the level of a rubber-stamping chamber [*Mameluckenparlament*]. In the restored France of the Bourbons, only 120,000 citizens have the right to vote, and the bourgeois monarchy that took the helm as a result of the July Revolution raises the number to an entire 200,000 out of a population of over 30 million. Thus it was always only the parliament of the ruling classes. This is not to say that at the moment where the parliament was democratised all of these harmful features were immediately removed. No, the parliament under the general franchise too is initially subject to many deficiencies. In a monarchy, the government has all manner of means at its disposal to fix elections. So long as it lies in the power of the government to dissolve the parliament when it seems fitting to it, hence perhaps at a point in time where popular sentiment is particularly aroused about a certain event, so long can it also to a certain degree bring about artificial election results. In England, minister Chamberlain dissolved Parliament during the Boer War in 1900, and won a brilliant majority.[12] This was the so-called "Khaki Election"—so termed after the khaki uniform of English soldiers. In Germany, we have had such khaki elections several times. So the elections of 1887, where an artificially engineered French scare played a major role; and so the elections of 1907, in which the Herero uprising was playing out, and which accordingly acquired the name "Hottentot Elections".[13] So too the elections of 1878, where Bismarck dissolved the Reichstag after Karl Nobiling's assassination attempt on Wilhelm I in order to achieve emergency laws against Social Democracy, fall into this category.[14] There the socialist scare acted as the means that made it possible for the government to get the majority it needed. The general franchise too is not simply the means of securing the independence of a parliament. But now the criticism that one has hitherto levelled at parliamentarism so far as Europe is concerned only ever affects a parliamentarism that was not yet the organ with full entitlements of a country that had achieved democratic self-government, but either merely pseudo-parliamentarism or still tainted by its residues. Ferdinand Lassalle describes pseudo-parliamentarism outstandingly in the second part of his treatise on constitutionalism, which I praised in an earlier chapter. Lassalle was by no means an opponent of real parliamentarism. Quite the opposite,

he preached to workers about the need to win the general franchise for the sake of establishing it at all. In that treatise, we find with him *inter alia* the statement: "As if in fact in the parliamentary régime and only in it did not exist the nature of a truly constitutional government." He declares the struggle for parliament to be extraordinarily important and impresses on the workers the necessity of achieving the general franchise, which he says in the "Open Reply" is not only their *political*, but also their "*social fundamental principle*", the "*fundamental condition of all social aid*". And at another point he explains to them regarding the franchise: "It will misfire a couple of times—it is not a dowsing rod, but it is the lance that heals the wound it has made."

At the time at which Lassalle was active, this was thoroughly in contradiction with the view of many socialists. In radical-revolutionarily-minded socialist circles one opposed parliamentarism, because the franchise—one provided the inconclusive example of France—had had conservative outcomes, and one harboured the idea of coming to power through a revolution in the streets, which one considered necessary in order to be able to change the politics and the social constitution of the country with dictatorial violence. Views of this kind were held among others by Wilhelm Liebknecht, whose memory is, in my view, rightly held in honour by German Social Democracy as that of a well-deserved standard-bearer. On 31 May 1869, Liebknecht held an address in Berlin about the political stance of Social Democracy, in which he not only polemicised harshly against the assessment of the general franchise that Lassalle had impressed on the workers, but also fought against participation in parliamentary negotiations. Parliamentarism, according to him, was shadow-boxing. Socialism, he argued, stands in an irreconcilable contradiction towards the old state. The old state must first be toppled, and only then could building the new socialist society begin. He argued that one should, since the franchise was now here, take part in election campaigns and enter the parliament for agitatory reasons, but only in order to hold protest speeches and not to take any further part in the debates. For this view, which corresponded to a phase in the development of the socialist movement, which was especially widespread in France, the following part of Liebknecht's work is quite characteristic:

> When discussing the Industrial Code, which was the main object of the present session, some of my party comrades believed that they had to make an exception in the interest of the workers and for propagandistic purposes. I was against this. Social Democracy may under no circumstances and on no

> domain parley with its opponents. *One can only negotiate where there exists a common foundation*. To negotiate with one's principled opponents means to sacrifice one's principles. Principles are indivisible, they are either *entirely preserved* or *entirely sacrificed*. The slightest principled concession is the surrender of the principle. Whoever makes bargains with enemies is parliamentarising; whoever parliamentarises, makes pacts.[15]

Liebknecht, who, when he held this address, was only forty-three years old, later disabused himself of this view, and also at the time did not make any headway with this line of argument, whose deceptive conclusion are obvious. The view of those of his party colleagues of whom he speaks here won out, the most significant of whom was August Bebel. Now at that time he counted in Germany as the appointed representative of the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, with whom he had up to that point lived in exile in England. But neither Marx nor Engels were in agreement with this treatment of the question. Marx wrote, after he had read this speech, to Engels on 10 August 1869:

> The part of Wilhelm's speech (delivered in *Berlin*) [Ed. B.—"The Political Stance of Social Democracy"] printed in the supplement demonstrates, beneath the stupidity, an undeniable cunning in arranging the affair suitably. By the way, this is very nice. *Since* the Reichstag may *only* be utilised as a *means of agitation*, one may *never agitate* there for something sensible and directly affecting the workers' interests![16]

But Engels had already written to Marx on 9 July [*M. O.—6 July*] with respect to the same address:

> Another fine idea of Wilhelm's is that concessions to the workers should neither be accepted nor *extorted* from the "present state". He'll get a long way with the workers like this.[17]

So the two fathers of scientific socialism did not share Liebknecht's doctrinaire standpoint. However, they were still close to him on several points. They too did not yet envisage true parliamentary activity by socialists. Yet over the course of development they took growing interest in the parliamentary struggles of German Social Democracy as well. It is interesting to track how these great thinkers and intellectual leaders gradually converted to a different appraisal of the activity of the working class in parliament, which later then partly under their influence also happened in

the camp of the French socialists, among whom the old revolutionary tradition had preserved itself far more strongly in people's heads.

But if Friedrich Engels, who outlived Karl Marx, in 1895 at the close of his life, in a preface to Marx's work *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*, with greater certainty than at any earlier time expressed his acknowledgment that Social Democracy in Germany used the general franchise not only to bring about social-democratic elections, but also for activity in the parliaments, both in the Reich parliament as well as the *Landtag* and municipal representations, then it must be remarked that this unreserved approval all the same still—if I may express myself in this way—stopped at the quantitative level. That is, that Engels here had in view the external agitatory successes, the fact that more and more social democrats were entering these bodies, and there were able to exert ever greater pressure on the governments and the bourgeois parties, but that he does not consider the Hegelian phrase "quantity becomes quality", that is, the effects of the greater *number* of representatives on the *nature* of their activity. To appreciate this aspect was also difficult for him, because from abroad he could not possibly attain an exact insight into the work of the social-democratic representations, which on top of that took different forms in the various representative bodies. But in general, it was a fact that where parliamentary activity was exercised by a strongly-grown socialist faction, its constitution also changed with that qualitatively. With ten or perhaps a few more deputies, in a parliament like the German Reichstag with its 397 members, one does not put all too much store by what they say. One listens to their speeches, pays attention to them as the case may be, but there is no compulsion to take their demands into account. But if 100 deputies—the last number that Engels experienced was not even half as great—or 112 (the final number before the war), if 112 deputies, so more than a quarter of the total number, in such a parliament represent the same party, under some circumstances quite an extraordinary amount already comes down to their votes; they gain greater material and also moral influence. But simultaneously there emerges for them through *the pure relative weight of exercising their power* the necessity for far more intensive activity, for more and more *positive collaboration* in legislation and administration in the municipalities and other self-administering bodies. That was not to the taste of all the members of Social Democracy. Many of the older and more than a few of precisely the younger generation believed they had to abide by the old tactics, and so parliamentary

activity among social democrats now also became *an object of dispute in qualitative terms.*

In Germany, it came to vigorous discussions about this on various occasions in the party. The first time after the fall of the Anti-Socialist Law, when in the Bavarian *Landtag* the social democrats—then still under the leadership of Georg von Vollmar—acted as a kind of needle on the scales and, to increase their power, in the elections and also otherwise moved towards making greater concessions to certain non-proletarian social groups than it would have seemed legitimate to do hitherto according to socialist theory as one had learned it. This namely towards the farmers, who play a particularly major role in Bavaria. That gave rise to major disputes within Social Democracy, and in 1894 at the party conference in Frankfurt am Main became the object of very lively debates, which continued with increased intensity a year later at the conference in Breslau, and there took up several days. Now it is a matter of the entire complex of questions about the agrarian issue, and the practical emphasis on how specifically one should take a stance towards the farmers, whether one had to hold out to them the prospect of any future at all, and whether one could support property-owning petty farmers without thereby under some circumstances disadvantaging the agricultural workers. It had shown itself that Social Democracy could no longer make do with more or less general, or rather generalising slogans, but instead was forced to penetrate more deeply into the nature and problems of economic development.

There was all the more occasion for this since from now on in one parliamentary body after another, so much depended on their votes that under some circumstances they became the ones responsible if a bill proposed by the government, a draft or a motion by some party or other was not adopted. For a long time, if something or other in a proposal or a motion was not agreeable to them, the representatives of Social Democracy could calmly reject it. It did not depend on their votes whether the bill or the motion became law or not. But with their growing strength, this comfortable lack of responsibility ceased. Now one had to consider whether one could and should take on the responsibility for a potential failure of such legal work.

More than that: In a country that was a parliamentary republic, it happened that in a great political crisis, a socialist who up to that point had been one of the leaders of the socialist faction in the Chamber accepted a position as a member of the government, i.e., became a minister. The country was France, and the person was deputy Alexandre Millerand; in

1900, when the struggle between the Republic and the anti-republican parties had risen to a fearsome height, he let himself be moved to accept a position in the Combes ministry.[18] That gave the occasion for an extraordinarily vicious dispute, which found an echo in all the countries where there were socialist parties, and in France itself led to a split in the party. The question was then discussed in detail at the congress of the resurrected socialist International, which took place in Paris at the same time as the World Exhibition of 1900. One wing of the French socialists, whose leader was Jean Jaurès, did not agree with the way in which Millerand's entry into the ministry had come about—it had not resulted from a carefully-deliberated resolution by the party, but rather had been downright imposed on the party—but they held it under the given circumstances to be objectively justified, whereas another wing, Marxists or Guesdists, named after their leader Jules Guesde, saw in it an infringement of the fundamental principles of proletarian class struggle, and fought against it. A passionate, and also very interesting debate took place, but at the end of it by 29 votes to 9 (among the latter the faction of the Guesdists) a compromise resolution was adopted, which the outstanding theorist Karl Kautsky had helped elaborate, and for which he became the rapporteur of the relevant commission, for which reason the resolution then also received the name "Kautsky Resolution". It is significant for the stance of Social Democracy at the time not only towards parliamentary struggle, but also towards government formation, and hence has a claim to be reproduced *verbatim* here. It reads:

> The conquest of political power by the proletariat in a modern democratic state cannot be the work of a mere *coup de main*, but can only be the conclusion of long and painstaking work by the political and economic organisation of the proletariat, its physical and moral regeneration, and the gradual conquest of electoral seats in municipal representations and legislative bodies.
>
> But the conquest of government force, where this is centralised, cannot take place piecemeal. The entry of a single socialist into a bourgeois ministry is not to be regarded as the normal beginning of the conquest of political power, but can always only be a temporary and exceptional emergency substitute in a situation of exigency.
>
> Whether in a given case such an exigency is present, that is a question of tactics and not of principle. About this, the congress does not have to decide. But in any case, this dangerous experiment can only then be of advantage if

> it is endorsed by a unanimous party organisation, and the socialist minister is and remains the mandatary of their party.
>
> Where the socialist minister becomes independent of their party, where they cease to be the mandatary of their party, there their entry into the ministry becomes from a means of strengthening the proletariat a means to weaken it, from a means to foster the conquest of political power a means of delaying it.
>
> The Congress declares that a socialist must leave a bourgeois ministry if the organised party declares that it has shown partisanship in the economic struggle between capital and labour.[19]

That was in 1900. In 1902 and 1903 lively debates played out over a similar question in Germany, of which those of the latter year in turn had an international effect.

After the great electoral success of German Social Democracy in 1903, which put the world into a state of astonishment, because the party's number of votes in one go had risen from not quite 2 million to 3 million (even with the franchise, which was still somewhat restricted at the time!), and 81 social-democratic deputies had entered the Reichstag, the idea was raised from one side—I can calmly say: it was I who did so—that Social Democracy should, since it now had the right to be represented in the presidium of the Reichstag, accept the position of a vice-president, even taking into account the danger that the relevant vice-president would be obliged, in accordance with the custom of the Reichstag at the time, to take part in the formal visit that the Reichstag presidium made every year to the monarch. That aroused a right storm in the party, and in combination with other more-or-less related occurrences had the effect that in the same year, 1903, at the party conference of German Social Democracy in Dresden the whole lot of disputes of the movement came to be discussed that indicated—I cannot say a "transformation" in the party's tactics, since the party was in fact already *en route* to developing itself in an ever more parliamentary direction—but whose resolution in the vein of a reformist policy perhaps had to put its stamp on this development a little too prematurely. The argument with representatives of this tendency, which at the time one called *revisionism*, preoccupied the party conference with debates lasting several days, at the crux of which lay the question of parliamentary policy. At the end, a resolution that rejected revisionism was adopted by a great majority—only a few persons voted against it, while the majority of party members who counted as revisionists thought it proper to vote for it

themselves and thereby show that they did not consider themselves targeted by it. The wording of this resolution does not need to be reproduced here, since already a year later—in 1904—it was raised at the International Socialist Congress that took place in Amsterdam.

At this International Socialist Congress, the wing that called themselves "Marxists" wanted to generalise the Dresden resolution for the whole International, and put forward a motion accordingly. Its opponents where the Jaurèsian faction of the French socialists and various socialist parties and party minorities from other countries. There was an extraordinarily intensive and—I may say—technically significant dispute about it, whose crowning point was a verbal duel in the plenary session of the Congress between Jean Jaurès and August Bebel about the questions of socialist politics. Jaurès baulked with all his strength against internationalising a tactic that in his view might perhaps be suitable for Germany. He remonstrated with the Germans: You have achieved great successes through your electoral activity, you have built a mighty party organism, but you still have no real power in the major questions of your country, because you have neither actually revolutionary nor parliamentary politics. He contrasted this by saying what a significant influence the socialist party had exercised in France through its parliamentary activity, how much it had affected the fortune of the country, the formation of the government and the government's policy. With passion he cried—and although this does not directly belong to the question addressed here, it lets his evaluation of the great European questions at the time be recognised and hence should be reproduced here in terse summary—

> What the world is suffering from, what fills all the peoples of Europe with concern, that is the political powerlessness of German Social Democracy. You are a great party, worthy of admiration, but you have no direct influence on the politics of your country.[20]

The politics of Imperial Germany was, according to this, already then found to be extremely unsettling in Europe. In his rhetorically no less effective reply, Bebel did not go into this question, but rather only pointed to the successes in reformist legislation that Social Democracy had scored in Germany indirectly through pressure from below. He walked away with the victory. Despite Jaurès' objection, the motion that internationalised the Dresden resolution was accepted by 19 votes to 5 with 12 abstentions. Its fundamental sentences read:

> The Congress condemns in the most decided way the revisionist endeavours to change our hitherto proven and victorious tactics, which rest on class struggle, along the lines that in place of the conquest of political power by overcoming our opponents comes a politics of rapprochement with the existing order of things. The consequence of a revisionist tactic of this kind would be that a party that works towards the fastest possible transformation of the existing bourgeois societal order into a socialist one—so is revolutionary in the best sense of the word—becomes a party that is satisfied with the reform of bourgeois society. Hence the Congress, in contrast to the existing revisionist endeavours, is of the conviction that class contradictions are not becoming weaker, but consistently stronger.[21]

That "hence" is somewhat bizarre, since no logical justification is provided at all for what is claimed here. The resolution continues by declaring:

1. That the party reject the responsibility for the political and economic situations that rest on the capitalist mode of production, and that it for that reason refuses any authorisation of means that are suited to keeping the ruling class in government;
2. That Social Democracy, in accordance with the Kautsky Resolution by the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900, cannot *aspire to* a share in government power within bourgeois society.[22]

That is the main part of this resolution. I will refrain from any further criticism—a critical word I have already parenthetically indicated. Here too, however one stands towards these claims, one cannot close one's mind to one comment: The logical connection between claim and reasoning is hard to find. The revisionists who had voted for the Dresden resolution explained: You insinuate something about the revisionist movement that does not lie in it at all, you are fighting something that the revisionists do not even want! That was true for the first two passages of the resolution. But on the other hand it had also been claimed that class struggles were intensifying, and that the party could take no part in government before Social Democracy had not attained political power. So Social Democracy everywhere had to adhere to its intransigent stance.

Yet history continued to take its course. The more Social Democracy grew and in the various countries political institutions democratised, the more the consequent effect turned out—and this was not to be avoided at

all—that the participation of socialists in the work of parliaments became increasingly positive. Their influence grew, and the question became pressing that had already once cropped up before with renewed intensity: How should Social Democracy conduct itself in the parliaments when *national budgets* come *to a vote*? If in the meeting of the parliament with the cooperation of the socialists a series of reforms and improvements are implemented, should then Social Democracy reject the budget and thereby under some circumstances show that their votes were fundamentally worthless, that they did not draw the appropriate conclusions from their stance, and thereby perhaps play into the hands of the parties who had resisted these advances? That is how the question was posed variously in Southern Germany. In several South German states, the social democrats had attained considerable influence, and now claimed for themselves the right to authorise the national budget. On top of this, in one state—Hesse—the situation was such that if the new budget was not approved, the old budget would remain in force. Over the course of a year, with the help of the social-democratic deputies a tax reform had been agreed, and if now the social democrats rejected the budget that had been written on the basis of their stance, the consequence would have been that with their votes and those of the Conservatives (who did not agree with the tax reform), since together they formed the majority, the new budget would be rejected, all the reforming work of the session would have been done in vain, and the old taxes would remain in effect. Under these circumstances, the social-democratic faction in the *Landtag* believed it had to approve the budget. But not everywhere was the matter so clear that such approval presented itself to everyone as a necessity that was independent of fundamental questions of policy, and so the question of budget approvals gave the occasion for lively struggles at various congresses of German Social Democracy. Now since in Germany Prussia alone comprised over three-fifths of the population, but in Prussia through the class franchise there Social Democracy was excluded from exercising immediate influence on the resolutions of the *Landtag*, the stance towards the budget question that thereby forced itself on the social democrats of Prussia received such strong preponderance that ultimately in 1910 at the party conference in Magdeburg a resolution was adopted that *forbade* the party's deputies from approving budgets, a resolution that now several of the party's organisations in the individual states also promised to submit to.

But the activity in the parliaments continued, and in turn, through the nature of things, it turned out in practice that Social Democracy would

not be able to persist in it. In the Reichstag elections of 1912 the number of its representatives in the Reichstag grew to 112, and the grouping of the parties took shape in such a way that in votes on important questions it came down ever more to the votes of the social democrats, and thereby their responsibility grew. After all, it happened repeatedly that in votes about new laws or new amendments to existing laws, even if they did not bring about everything that Social Democracy had demanded, indeed, if besides their improvements some of the provisions that Social Democracy fought against were incorporated, but the improvements substantially outweighed them, the faction saw itself induced still to vote in their favour.[23]

Then at the start of August 1914, the war broke out, and the decision that the majority of the parliamentary party took in the question of the *approval of war credits* brought a new dispute into Social Democracy, but at the same time also had an effect on its stance towards the parliament and towards the government.[24] The approving majority of the party thereby came for a time into a relationship towards the government that diverged quite substantially from the relationship that had prevailed between government and Social Democracy in Germany up till that point. However, it did not remain that way until the war's end. The inability of the Kaiser's government to bring peace to the exhausted nation led to the Revolution, and Social Democracy now became itself the government, specifically in the actual sense of the word it became a governing party. This brought a new dispute: the question of governing coalitions.

This we shall have to go into in another context. What has been presented here, which can be placed alongside similar events from other countries, illustrates in the clearest possible way that the stronger penetration of Social Democracy into the parliaments inevitably also qualitatively changes its parliamentary activity. That takes place not without internal battles, nor without intermittent backlashes. But the dynamics of things, if I can put it this way, still drives again and again towards the necessary consequence. In this it goes much as a saying by the famous church historian Karl Hase shows, which I have also cited elsewhere: "The victory of an idea is the corruption of this idea", i.e., if an idea wins (with Hase this refers to Christianity), then it adjusts itself to the historically given conditions, that means, it makes concessions to these conditions—and that is in a scientific sense corruption.[25] So one could also say, depending on how one stands towards these questions, that indeed the parliamentary activity of Social Democracy, which after all was an activity that rested on victories,

even if it did not yet bring it a complete victory, that this parliamentary activity led to adaptations to the real conditions, which a movement that withholds itself from parliamentary activity does not need to make. Only it is more than questionable whether a political movement that distances itself from parliaments will ever form more than a sect in a parliamentarily-governed country, or will ever attain the importance that Social Democracy has achieved.

With all of this, however, it should not be concealed that parliamentarism also has its negative sides! With parliamentary activity is associated not just a corruption of the idea in the sense developed above—such a corruption can mean for the movement an advance compared to abstract theory, a gain in realistic insight—but in some circumstances it is also associated with the danger of a corruption of political morality. The more parties gain power, especially in parliamentarily-governed countries, the more influence they have on the dispensing of positions. One should recall what was said about this at the start with respect to England in the eighteenth century, one should keep in mind what is an open secret with regard to political corruption in the United States, and it would be blindness if one wanted to deny that also with us there are possibilities for corruption in the parliamentary system of government. One must remind oneself of this already so as not to let the sense for creating correctives to this danger slacken. For Social Democracy cannot renounce the thing itself because of the danger associated with it. After all, life in general is a great corrupter.

But what are the correctives against the downsides of parliamentarism? There was a time where in the socialist International the view was widespread that so-called pure democracy, which has found its wide-ranging realisation in Switzerland, namely direct legislation by the people, is this countervailing means! In Germany, the German socialist Emil Rittinghausen, who intermittently belonged to the Reichstag as a deputy for Social Democracy, already defended this idea early on in a series of pamphlets that were also translated into other languages, and in the 1890s the French socialist Jean Allemane took up the idea in his agitation and managed to ensure that it was put before the Zurich Congress of the socialist International in 1893 in the form of a proposal that amounted to abolishing parliaments entirely and replacing them with direct legislation.[26] It found little favour, since what he wanted was simply impossible! Something like that could be implementable in small Swiss cantons with not quite a hundred thousand inhabitants, which had no foreign policy,

and no major problems to solve. But in a major state with millions of inhabitants, with a territorial extent like France or Germany or Prussia, to let all the tasks of legislation and stewardship of the state be regulated by direct popular vote already runs up against the laws—as I have argued previously—of space and number. To manage the quantity of work associated with this, the citizens of such a country would have to vote on every voting day on entire reams of proposed bills, most of which they cannot review, because it is not possible that each of them can have the necessary understanding of the impact of each individual one. So already for this reason the replacement for parliamentarism does not lie here, and also in large states there speaks against direct popular decision the consideration that, where millions vote, with the individual voter the feeling of responsibility that lies in the casting of their vote can naturally only be very low. About all of these questions, Karl Kautsky at the time wrote a book, which in my view is well worth reading, with the title: *Parliamentarism, Direct Legislation, and Social Democracy*. Further, I myself addressed these questions, apart from in the essay "The Social-Political Significance of Space and Number", in the pamphlet *Parliamentarism and Social Democracy*, where I have developed similar ideas as those that are presented here, and drew some conclusions regarding the future of parliamentarism, which after all will hardly be the final word in this development.[27]

Of the many correctives proposed against its excesses, undoubtedly the outstanding point that comes into consideration is the means of restricting the central power's possibilities for overreach by strengthening local and district self-administration and democratisation of these administrative bodies. An idea that, as remarked earlier, Proudhon gave form to with great exaggerations in his work on *The Principle of Federation*, but Karl Marx also took extensively into account in his work *The Civil War in France*. From this latter work one passage should be cited here once more:

> In a rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandate impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents.[28]

And Marx himself says to this:

> The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society.[29]

So he too wants a strong development of local and district-level self-administration, which is easier to oversee, and then from the bottom upwards a federative construction, whose institution of last resort [*letzte Instanz*]—to which, however, then the former authorities would have to allocate its tasks, and not, say, the latter to the former—should be constituted by the central authority [*Zentralbehörde*]. Whether such a national construction would prove to be possible and have the expected results at the present stage of social development seems doubtful to me, but the reference to the necessity of a far-reaching expansion of democratic self-administration is certainly a very noteworthy idea, which after all also to a certain degree has already been realised and has borne many good fruits. These local self-administrative bodies have been called compulsory cooperatives, because every local, or specifically district resident belongs to them by law, whether they want to or not. To them are added as administrative organs the free cooperatives, which today in various domains fulfil significant functions and are becoming parts of public administration. As such, society has been forced to recognise the organisations of the workers, as much as they were hated at the start, in the first place the workers' trade unions, but then also the workers' consumer cooperatives and the free associations for the purposes of bodily and cultural development. However, cooperatives of other classes—one may think of the rural cooperatives—also fulfil societal functions and are thereby a piece of the great self-administration of society. That does not follow a single schema, this takes shape by various routes, but the administrative autonomy of the population is increasing, government from above is declining in significance, even if—and this must be said to those who believed that they could abolish the state—it does not vanish. Central legislative and administrative functions will still continue to exist for quite some time. Only gradually will self-administration take over its functions on the basis of laws created together. The parliament will not be written off lock, stock, and barrel. But one comes to a development which one may hope will more and more constrain and ultimately overcome the dangers that seem to be organically

connected to old-style parliamentarism. So one must learn to grasp these questions not dogmatically but as questions of development.

If one wants to understand how administration changes with the growth of the organism, then one can trace that by studying the constitutional history—or expressed more simply, the history of the statutes—of workers' organisations. The workers' organisations usually begin with the most extreme democracy, mostly with direct legislation and selection of officials through a gathering of members. But the more they grow, the more they are forced to form representative bodies and to transfer certain power- and leadership-competencies to these representations. The mass then has only to exercise a kind of permanent control by means of its confidence in its representatives [*Vertrauensmänner*]. But the organisation itself takes on the shape of an organism that represents a kind of democratic state. Via the free workers' movement it can be shown how numerical growth, the greater quantity of comrades with equal rights itself compels a qualitative change in the constitution of their organisation. Anybody who does not grasp this and does not acknowledge the conclusions that arise from this, will also never grasp what lies in the concept of scientific socialism. This is, as was shown in the first chapter, a sociological theory of development, that is, the conception of the socialist movement as a movement that in its progression shapes itself and in doing so depends closely on the organic laws of social development. An insight that, in turn, has today become an object of dispute within socialism, and specifically has been put on the agenda by the appearance of so-called Bolshevism; and it is with this question that we now want to occupy ourselves.

Notes

1. Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836), French *abbé*, political theorist and early sociologist, one of the early ideologues of the 1789 French Revolution, then later supporter of Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup d'état*.
2. Archibald Philip Primrose, Earl of Rosebery (1847–1929), British Liberal politician, briefly Prime Minister (1894–1895), nationalist, imperialist, and anti-socialist reformer.
3. [Ed. B.—The Conservatives in England aspire to reform the House of Lords by broadening its basis. The Liberal-Radicals offer diehard resistance to this, because a reformed House of Lords could more easily become a more dangerous chamber for democracy than an unchanged one com-

posed of the nobility, which one has "reformed" by ever more new restrictions on its rights.]

4. The Mutiny Acts (1688–1879) were an annually-renewed series of Parliamentary Acts passed to regulate, provision, and fund the English and later British Army.
5. [Ed. B.—Despite this, the English have only given this up with difficulty. When the secret ballot was supported to be introduced, not only the Conservatives but also very liberal and socialistically-minded men declared themselves decidedly against this, *inter alia* the sincere and significant reformist socialist [*Reformsozialist*] John Stuart Mill. He found it undignified for a free person not to cast their vote openly. Only in 1872 was the secret ballot introduced, and only *on a trial basis*, but was never again abolished, because it became clear what advantages it has.]
6. [Ed. B.—But even the latter is not even necessarily true. When I lived in London, one day an agent of the Conservative Party came to me and asked if he could put me on his list of Conservative voters. When I explained to him that I am a foreigner and hence not entitled to vote, he retorted that I was on the voter list, and since the matter was legally settled by virtue of the fact that one had not challenged my name in front of the electoral commissioner, I was now of right a voter and could vote, without risking anything whatsoever by doing so. My objection that an error in drawing up the list could not give me any right that I was not legally entitled to seemed not to make any impression on him, and only when I explained to him that I was after all also not a Conservative, but a socialist, did he take his leave of me.]
7. A "Batch of Peers [*Pairsschub*]" was an instrument in constitutional monarchies to shift the balance within parliamentary bodies by appointing a larger number of new peers within the upper chamber.
8. William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), British Liberal politician, four times Prime Minister (1868–1874, 1880–1885, 1886, 1892–1894) and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1852–1855, 1859–1866, 1873–1874, 1880–1882), supporter of equality of opportunity and free trade, reformed the parliamentary franchise to secret voting and single-member constituencies.
9. David Lloyd George (1863–1945), British Liberal politician, Chancellor of the Exchequer (1908–1915) who introduced the welfare reforms of the 1909 "People's Budget", Prime Minister (1916–1922) during the final stages of WW1, reformed the parliamentary franchise to full male and partial female suffrage.
10. Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804–1881), British Conservative politician, twice Prime Minister (1868, 1874–1880) and three times

Chancellor of the Exchequer (1852, 1858–1859, 1866–1868), instrumental to formulation of "One Nation" conservatism and "Tory democracy".

11. Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford (1676–1745), British politician, first and longest-serving Prime Minister (1721–1742).
12. Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914), British Liberal politician, municipal reformer, imperialist, protectionist, and opponent of Irish Home Rule, dominant force in the Conservative–Liberal Unionist victory in the 1900 "Khaki Election".
13. The 1887 German election, effectively a referendum on Otto von Bismarck's newest military proposal, took place under the shadow of rising Boulangism in France and was won by the National-Liberal Party. The 1907 election was dominated by questions of colonial policy, above all the 1904–1908 Herero Wars, and was won by *Zentrum*. Both elections saw significant losses of parliamentary seats for the SPD.
14. Karl Eduard Nobiling (1848–1878), radical socialist activist, perpetrator of an assassination attempt on Kaiser Wilhelm I.
15. Wilhelm Liebknecht, 'Über die Politische Stellung der Sozialdemokratie, insbesondere mit Bezug auf den Norddeutschen "Reichstag"', in Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Kleine politische Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1976 [1869]), pp. 14–30.
16. Karl Marx, 'Letter to Engels, 10 August', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 43: Letters 1868–70* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 343.
17. Friedrich Engels, 'Letter to Marx, 6 July', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 43: Letters 1868–70* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 308.
18. Émile Justin Louis Combes (1835–1921), French Radical politician, leader of the Radical–Radical-Socialist–Socialist left-republican *bloc des gauches* cabinet (1902–1905). Alexandre Millerand (1859–1943), French socialist politician, Prime Minister (1920) and President (1920–1924), whose appointment as Minister of Commerce in the 1899–1902 Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet prompted a fierce debate in the socialist movement about participation in bourgeois coalition governments.
19. International Socialist Congress, *Cinquième Congrès Socialiste International tenu à Paris du 23 au 27 septembre 1900: Compte-rendu analytique officiel* (Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie et d'édition, 1901), pp. 114–16.
20. International Socialist Congress, *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß zu Amsterdam 14–20 Auust 1904* (Berlin: Verlag Epedition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1904), p. 37.
21. Ibid., p. 31.
22. Ibid.

23. [Ed. B.—I may be permitted to recall here a remark relating to this change, which August Bebel made to me only a few weeks before his death. During a sickbed visit that I paid to him, before he embarked on the journey to Passugg that would prove fateful for him, we came to speak in our discussion about a draft bill that was preoccupying the Reichstag at that time, which on the whole signified an improvement to workers' insurance, but contained a few provisions that were being challenged by the party. To my question about how he thought we should ultimately vote he answered, very decidedly: "Accept it! The times are past where we could allow ourselves to reject it over shortcomings like those."]
24. Marius S. Ostrowski (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein on Social Democracy and International Politics: Essays and Other Writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 8–13, 22, 42, 174, 183, 220–3, 395–7, 402.
25. Karl August von Hase (1800–1890), German liberal evangelical theologian and church historian.
26. Jean Allemane (1843–1935), French socialist politician and pioneer of syndicalism, veteran of the 1871 Paris Commune, co-founder of the French Workers' Party alongside Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, later supporter of Paul Brousse and the "possibilists" in their conflict with Guesde, in 1905 co-founder of the French Section of the Workers' International [*Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*] with Brousse, Guesde, Aristide Briand, and Jean Jaurès.
27. Eduard Bernstein, *Parlamentarismus and Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: Pan-Verlag, 1906).
28. Karl Marx, '*The Civil War in France*: Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870–71* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), p. 332.
29. Ibid., p. 333.

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CHAPTER 10

The Bolshevist Perversion of Socialism

The *Communist Manifesto* and the formulation of the dictatorship of the proletariat—The rise of Bolshevism—Its precursors, the utopians of the socialist revolution—The reformist element in Marxism—Marx ties the victory of socialism to economic maturity—Bolshevism wants to compel maturity by force—Its superstitious belief in the creative power of violence—Trotsky's learning to ride on the back of the nation—Marxism reveals the limits of the will, Bolshevism ignores them—Bungling experimentalism—The imitation of tsarist despotism—The blood guilt of Bolshevism

What are the fundamental ideas of the doctrine that we have come to know as Bolshevism? What is it based on?

In the first volume of his great work *Capital*, in the 25th chapter, sixth section, Karl Marx, who is preoccupied with the genesis of industrial capitalists, outlines the various methods of the so-called "original accumulation" of capital, i.e., the original formation of capital. In contrast to the accounts of bourgeois economists, who trace the formation of capital to "savings [*Ersparnis*]", specifically economising [*Sparen*], Marx shows that capital emerged in a completely different way, and writes regarding the methods of the true original accumulation of capital:

> In England at the end of the seventeenth century, they arrive at a systematical combination, embracing the colonies, the national debt, the modern mode of taxation, and the protectionist system. These methods depend in part on brute force, e. g., the colonial system. But they all employ the power of the State, the concentrated and organised force of society, to hasten, hothouse

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> fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. *Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.*[1]

The end of this extracted passage, which I have emphasised here, has played a unique role in the socialist movement of our times, in parties that derive their theoretical insights directly from Marx. It was propagated by French socialists, who called themselves Marxists, and one of whose leaders, Paul Lafargue, was Karl Marx's son-in-law, the other, Jules Guesde, was a friend of Marx, in a dogmatic reading as the proof that all socialist activity had to aim for the conquest of political power through revolutionary violence. But it should be remarked that Marx in this passage is simply stating a historical fact, but is not positing a formula for immediate application.[2]

Out of this establishment of a historical fact, however, the faction of the Russian socialists that call themselves *Bolsheviki* makes an imperative for the whole of socialist policy: We must have the force [*Gewalt*] to build the new society, it cannot go any other way, all our thoughts and energy must be directed towards the conquest of political power. A conception that could, of course, base itself on certain parts of the *Communist Manifesto*. There it reads, e.g., at the end, where it is talking about the achievement of political power by the proletariat:

> We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.
>
> The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.
>
> Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production.[3]

Then are listed a series of measures that conform to certain measures by the bourgeoisie in earlier revolutions. Further, the defenders of the

outlined way of thinking appeal to a bit in the letter by Karl Marx about the draft for a unity programme for German Social Democracy in 1875, the draft of the Gotha Programme. Marx namely says there:

> Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.[4]

This passage too is interpreted dogmatically by the Bolshevists [*Bolschewisten*], as one has taken on the word *Bolsheviki* into German. This party, which today as the party of the Russian communists stands at the head of the Third or Communist International, previously called itself also the Party of the Maximalists. In the dispute between the Russian Marxists, two tendencies had taken shape: One wanted to wage the struggle by Russia's Social Democracy with a programme of socialist minimum demands ("minimum programme"), similarly to how at the time the French Marxists had elaborated it with an introduction authored for it by Marx, the others represented the standpoint that one had to establish a maximum of demands, and constantly hold it up to the movement as a kind of beacon. Of these two tendencies, the latter is then that of the Bolshevists, whereas the former is called the faction or party of the Menshevists—appellations that correspond to the concepts of "more" and "less", which partly refer to the level of their demands, and partly to the relative numbers of their supporters. The dispute for a great part amounted to a scholastic playing-off against one another of statements by Marx, whereby one side ignored the fact that the entire Marxian doctrine is primarily a theory of development, and that Marx over the course of years himself had undergone a development. Engels repeatedly acknowledged that in the first period of their creative work, significant errors about the speed and course of development crept into their thinking. But is the Marxian theory itself thereby rendered null and void? Certainly not. The great, enduring aspect of Marxism, which stands above all individual applications, is precisely the fact that Marxism has given the theory of social development a new foundation, which is unshaken in its main idea, the theory of the definite influence of the mode of production. Marx repeatedly expressed the organic idea of development of his theory very definitely. So in the preface to his work, which appeared in 1859, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, but so also in his preface to *Capital*. In the latter, Marx says, and this is very noteworthy for his way

of looking at things, that even the ruling classes of the present are becoming dimly aware that current society is "no solid crystal", but rather "*an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing*".[5]

Here is shown the contradiction between the fundamental viewpoints that divide the great majority of the social-democratic parties of our times from the party of the Bolshevists and their Western European emulators.

The Bolshevist party emerged from the Marxist school of Russian socialism, whereby it is worth remarking that precisely the three personalities whom one can describe as the actual founders of this school, the late Georgi Plekhanov, the just recently departed Vera Zasulich, and the still-living Pavel Axelrod, were opponents of the Bolshevists, or specifically Axelrod still is.[6] When I remarked above that in their appeal to Marx the Bolshevists proceed scholastically in various ways, then I want to add that I regard as scholasticism the intellectual tendency or activity that is directed towards providing proofs deductively for already-established tenets or ideas, often with tortuous interpretative arts, whereby the inductive moment, the examination with reference to the facts, comes up extraordinarily short, if it is not entirely left undiscussed. Now precisely it is the essential quality of the theory of social development of Marx and Engels that it stresses the narrow, one can say here with the greatest justification, the *organic* connection of the political-social with the facts of *economic* development, that is, the *relations of production*. From this standpoint, the authors of the *Communist Manifesto*, as revolutionarily as they thought for their time, and as unreservedly as they had taken the side of the communist ideas of the progressive wing of the workers' movement in their days, they still after all, when they were elaborating their theory, had taken a stance against the radical socialists of their times, who were taken to be revolutionary communists, but who in fact only had a claim to be described as utopians of the socialist revolution. To them belonged the undoubtedly talented but scientifically-unschooled German communist Wilhelm Weitling, the author of the work *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, which appeared in 1842 and was hailed by Marx as remarkably worthy of note, although this did not prevent Marx from later turning sharply against Weitling, when he in his agitation turned the workers' heads with exaggerated radicalism. This is of interest for the reason that Weitling's ideas are similar to many of the slogans that are preached to the workers today by followers of Bolshevism.

In winter 1846–1847, Weitling came to Brussels, where Marx and Engels lived at the time and were developing and polemically

championing their great theory. The Russian writer Annenkov was present at a visit that Weitling paid to Marx, and he outlines in his memoirs a vigorous altercation between Marx and Weitling.[7] Weitling, who came from out of the working class, appealed substantially to this vis-à-vis Marx, just as he did in general to the emotional aspect of his theory, and it is notable how energetically, according to Annenkov, Marx emphasised the indispensability vis-à-vis Weitling of concrete scientific thinking, and once cried out, striking the table angrily with his fist: "*Ignorance has never helped anyone*!"

Four years later, after the Revolution, Marx came into conflict with his erstwhile comrades-in-arms, who in a similar way to Weitling appealed to feeling and the will. This was the faction of the Communist League led by Karl Schapper and A. Willich.[8] The contradiction repeated itself in the years 1870 to 1872 in the International Workingmen's Association, in Marx's struggle against the Russian socialist revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin, who, and even more whose—I cannot say "student" and not even "comrade", even though he exerted great influence on Bakunin, but—Bakunin's temporary fellow-warrior, the student Nechayev, who must be described as a precursor of Bolshevism.[9] His ideas are outlined and criticised in the work, substantially written by Friedrich Engels in agreement with Marx: *A Conspiracy Against the International*.[10] With the most extreme stridency this namely turns itself against the revolutionary romanticism of Bakunin, whom Nechayev had further exaggerated to the extreme, so that a kind of socialism of the vein of Rinaldo Rinaldini came out. Bakunin had specifically glorified the Russian robbers and had gone so far as to declare that one would have to open the penitentiaries if one was starting a revolution. A speculation on elements who without consideration for theory, morality, etc., simply placed themselves in opposition to ordered society. The rejection of such fantasies and the emphasis on the connection between the development towards socialism and the development of the economy in general, that means ultimately of the mode of production, is the decisive idea of the Marxian theory. For this, the statement already cited from the preface to *Capital*, that present-day society—the society of liberal economics, "is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change and constantly changing", is far more important than many other statements that are often cited. In *Capital*, Marx says at a different point, where he speaks of factory legislation and outlines the effect of the 10-hour day on the cotton workers of Lancashire:

> However, the principle had triumphed with its victory in those great branches of industry which form the most characteristic creation of the modern mode of production. Their wonderful development from 1853 to 1860, hand in hand with the physical and moral regeneration of the factory workers, struck the most purblind.[11]

And in connection with the previously cited passage in the preface, Marx says:

> In England the progress of social disintegration is palpable. When it has reached a certain point, it must react on the Continent. There it will take a form more brutal or more humane, according to the degree of development of the working class itself. Apart from higher motives, therefore, their own most important interests dictate to the classes that are for the nonce the ruling ones, the removal of all legally removable hindrances to the free development of the working class. For this reason, as well as others, I have given so large a space in this volume to the history, the details, and the results of English factory legislation. One nation can and should learn from others.[12]

This too shows, I may say, a strongly reformist weft in Marx's theory, which in its line of thought is revolutionary. The further he advances in his intellectual development, the more the idea of the connection between the level of economic development and the possibilities of political and legal interventions finds in him precise expression. In 1875, he says in his letter about the draft of the Gotha Programme of then-united Social Democracy:

> Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development which this determines.[13]

Now, in Bolshevism—I stress once again: in its doctrine!—all of this is ignored or circumvented. Bolshevism rests either on the *Communist Manifesto* with its tersely pointed statements, which belong to the early period of Marx and Engels, where they took pleasure *à épater le bourgeois*—in bewildering the bourgeois. Or it gives later statements by Marx, in tearing them out of their context, the most cloddish, coarsely simplified interpretation. So Marx says in the penultimate chapter of the first volume

of *Capital*, which identifies the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation:

> Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point [Ed. B.—namely over the course of capitalist development] where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. Thus integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.[14]

So if development itself becomes impossible to reconcile with the capitalist integument, then the expropriators [*Expropriateurs*]—Marx calls the capitalists "dispossessors [*Enteigner*]", because in competition the larger capitalists dispossess the smaller ones—are dispossessed, expropriated. Out of this statement, which marks a historical perspective, the Bolshevists have created the saying: "Rob the robbers!", and the workers have taken that literally and in many cases acted on it in a drastic application. The business-owners are simply presented, instead of as economic dispossessors, as moral stealers, as thieves. This in direct contradiction to Marx, who in the preface to *Capital*, where he explains that the capitalist and the landowner do not come out of the book very well, and do not appear in a very rosy light, he expressly says:

> But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.[15]

In every respect, I say, the Bolshevist doctrine has in these points coarsened the Marxian theory, one could say: barbarised it. The historical, so up to a certain level of economic development necessary function of the business-owner as the driving agent of production is eradicated in it—this too, in turn, in contradiction to Marx, who in the third volume of his book *Capital*, which of course only the fewest have read, in one of the final chapters (the 24th), which deals with the sources of income, explicates that surplus labour in general as the labour of the labourer beyond the measure of given needs *would always have to remain*, and then adds to this the already cited passage:

> It is one of the civilising aspects of capital that it enforces this surplus labour in a manner and under conditions which are more advantageous to the development of the productive forces, social relations, and the creation of the elements for a new and higher form than under the preceding forms of slavery, serfdom, etc.[16]

So in turn, Marx shows that capital, as harshly as he otherwise attacks it, fulfils important, progress-fostering, he says explicitly *civilising* functions in the development of human society.

Bolshevism has coolly defied all of this and dismissed the conclusions that arise from this for economic policy, and treated violence as an omnific force [*Allschöpferin*]. Among leading Bolshevists one finds at a certain heightened level—more even than with Lenin with Bukharin, Zinoviev, and others—passages where to violence are ascribed simply the magical forces of panacean remedies. One need only have violence, then one could steer development according to one's will! Here some proofs of this:

Marx says—this again is also important—in 1859, in his preface to the book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

> No social formation is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.[17]

In the preface to the first volume of *Capital* one reads:

> [E]ven when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement—and it is the ultimate aim of this work, to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society—it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs.[18]

So says Marx. Now let us take to hand the work by N. Bukharin: *The Programme of the Communists (Bolsheviki)*. There the socialist revolution through the dictatorship of the working class is straight-out proclaimed in Russia, this overall still barely-developed country, as a matter of the immediate present with the remark:

> Dictatorship of the working class means the state power of the working class, which *strangles* the bourgeoisie and the property-owners,

and right afterwards:

> This power of the workers can only emerge from the socialist revolution of the working class, which destroys the bourgeois state and bourgeois power.[19]

And that is written in a country that famously has not even had a bourgeois state yet at all! Further, it says that the dictatorship must be "iron", a word that, as it does in this work, in general returns countless times in the literature of Bolshevism, and is defined in the most brutal sense. A few pages later one reads:

> We see now that an infringement of various freedoms is necessary regarding the enemies of the revolution. There can be in the revolution no freedoms for the enemies of the people and of the revolution.[20]

But as enemies of the revolution are presented not only all bourgeois parties without distinction, but also those socialists (Menshevists and Social-Revolutionaries), who occupy a different standpoint than the Bolshevists. It is the most extreme terrorism that one can imagine. In the work by Leon Trotsky on Soviet power and international imperialism—a lecture that Trotsky held in front of uneducated Russian workers—one reads:

> And, in the middle there would be those politicians who look both to the Left and to the Right. These representatives of the Mensheviks and Right SRs would say: "Power must be shared, half-and-half."

That is what he tells workers! And he continues:

> But, comrades, power, after all, is not a sort of cottage loaf which can be shared half-and-half, or divided into four pieces.

What a comparison, and what a denial of history! The following passage shows its purpose. Trotsky pontificates on:

> Power is the instrument by means of which a certain class secures its domination. Either this instrument serves the working class, or it serves against the working class.

With that, development in the life of peoples is scratched out, there is no transition, no development from one societal state to its opposite, but only its upending by power. He continues as follows:

> There is no choice in this matter. Since there are two adversaries, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, together with the poorest peasantry, and since these two adversaries are fighting each other, they cannot possess one instrument common to them both. After all, one and the same rifle or gun cannot serve both of two opposing armies at once.[21]

To correctly gauge the nature of this line of argument, one must remain mindful of the circumstances under which it was delivered and what the level of development was of the country in which it was impressed upon workers. Never did Marx and Engels present the political question to workers by means of so childish and fatuous a comparison. Even when Germany was already at a substantially economically higher stage than Russia of 1918—not to mention at all its cultural development—they still declared a temporary support for the progressive bourgeoisie by the socialist workers to be appropriate.

After the model of the present deductions, which are suited to the conceptualising capacity of very naïve and undeveloped people, which run through the entire lecture, which has been translated as a piece of propaganda writing into every language, and which alternate with similarly curious claims about the causes and effective forces of the world war, Trotsky comes to speak about the exercise of political power by the Bolshevists, and raises with the following arguments the claim to excuse their missteps:

> Some say: what good is it for us to have taken power without first having learned how to wield it? To these wiseacres we reply: but how could we learn the joiner's trade if we had never held a joiner's tool? In order to learn how to run a country you need to be in charge of its administration, you need to hold state power. Up to now nobody has learnt how to ride a horse while sitting in a room. To learn that art you have to saddle a horse and get on its back. Perhaps the horse will rear up and throw its inexperienced rider a few times. Well so what, we get up, we get on again, we have another go—and we learn to ride![22]

If such trying-out only affected the personalities who want to learn to ride—read: rule—then one could say: all very well. But to carry out violently with an entire state far-reaching economic experiments into an uncertain future, with the idea that although it could also go wrong, one would then simply do it all over again, to proceed in such a way with a great people, whereby under some circumstances many hundreds of thousands would be delivered over to hunger, destitution, annihilation, is something else entirely. For the social reformer, the revolutionary, there is also no categorical imperative! That they do not care about having set at nought the scientific theory of the great thinkers to whom they appealed where it did not suit them is indicative for the missing element in the Bolshevists' lines of reasoning.

In pointing this out, it does not occur to me to cast aspersions on the motives of the Bolshevists in any way. Just as in every revolutionary movement, there is naturally in this one too a great number of idealists. But certainly in it there are also people of a different nature. However, I will leave this moment undiscussed. Here it is a matter of the doctrine, of their way of understanding and how it affects the actions of the Bolshevists. But here precisely it shows how far they deviate from the conception of their great master and thinker Karl Marx! They admit almost no social conditionality for their action at all. It is enough for them that, along with some quantity of major industry, there is also a proletariat present in the state at all, strong enough to play the active role in the seizure of power. But otherwise in the most disparate of their writings, those socialists, whether Marxists or not, who stress a certain maturity of the proletariat and degree of maturity of economic development as the condition for socialist transformation, are ridiculed, derided, or even reviled. This has happened, e.g., to as, one may say, true a Marxist as Karl Kautsky, whom Lenin and his comrades straight-up present as a renegade because he criticised their methods—to stay entirely silent about myself here.

Bolshevism acknowledges almost no limits to will in history. It is the most fateful aspect of the Bolshevists' policy that they act as if there is nothing to rival the will of the revolutionary reformer. In the maxims of their measures they are far more the likeness of original tsarism than the image of Marxism; they are only a distortion of the latter. For the significant aspect with Marx is after all precisely that his and Engels' theory is a scientifically-grounded theory of the limits of will in the history of human society. On this basis, one has often called this theory fatalistic, but that is completely misguided. Marxism is very far from denying the significance

of will in history or misrecognising its necessity. There was a democratic poet who died young, and who has long since been forgotten, but who was once widely read and enjoyed by many people, Friedrich von Sallet, the author of the *Lay Gospel*. In one of his poems, "Historical Development", he sang at a time of political stagnation in Germany:

> You say to us: "Youth with blood that runs too hot,
> Give up your rapturous dreams of freedom,
> Good things only emerge historically."
> Fine! But where nothing happens, is that history?[23]

Marx completely acknowledges this standpoint, it altogether corresponds to his theory. But what one does, one can only carry through within the relation of the given forces and conditions of development.

Friedrich Engels dedicated some notable chapters to this object in his polemic against Dühring, which precisely today have again become very relevant. One of them quite specifically also concerns the method of the Bolshevists, to equivalise very different things on the basis of external features, and to deny the necessary consideration for the historical contingency of social institutions. Dühring had spoken of Greek slavery, on which the entire Greek civilisation rested, and equated it with wage-labour. Engels replies to this:

> when he asserts that our modern wage bondage can only be explained as a somewhat transformed and mitigated heritage of slavery, […] with equal justice we might say that wage-labour could only be explained as a mitigated form of cannibalism, which, it is now established, was the universal primitive form of utilisation of defeated enemies.
>
> The role played in history by force as contrasted with economic development is therefore clear. … Either it works in the sense and in the direction of the natural economic development, in which case no conflict arises between them, […] or it works against economic development, in which case, as a rule, with but few exceptions, *force succumbs to it*. These few exceptions are isolated cases of conquest, in which the more barbarian conquerors exterminated or drove out the population of a country and laid waste or allowed to go to ruin productive forces which they did not know how to use. … Inexorably and without exception the economic development has forced its way through.[24]

Now, as they themselves can no longer deny, the Bolshevists have had to make this experience: Where their violent measures did not take any account of economic contingency, they have failed miserably. But the costs of this experience the Russian people has sadly had to pay by means of endlessly many sacrifices.

Precisely the great thing in Marx and Engels is the limitation that the will receives in history with them—receives namely on two sides, under certain circumstances against the revolution, but then again also in the revolution's favour. On a page that Friedrich Engels gifted to me from out of Marx's *Nachlass*, a piece from Marx's first draft (which was never printed) of the *Communist Manifesto*, there is among other things a phrase that Marx says to the representatives of the old society, who declare this society to be indestructible in its foundation: "You are backward looking utopians."[25] That is supposed to mean: You want to hold up development, deny that there can be another form of society beyond yours, want to claim that yours is the final one; but if you say this, you are backwards-oriented utopians! With all stridency Marxism stresses the power of the will. Although it discourages the workers from undertakings depending on whether the objective preconditions that are required for them are still lacking. But it also fires them up and preserves them from discouragement. The workers' movement influenced by the spirit of Marxism clearly bears witness to this. "With us to victory!" is its *leitmotif*, is the feeling: "But we will win! We represent the cause of the future!" But the ignoring of the boundaries for the power of the will is the fateful miscalculation in the policy of Bolshevism. It explains its many economic-political blunders, which one after the other they after all have been required to admit. Bolshevist policy is a continuous bungling experimenting-around. An entire literature has provided crushing proofs of this. Certainly, one finds in the decrees and drafts of the Bolshevists all sorts of captivating things: great plans in regard to education and social care, in respect of the organisation of production and circulation, in relation to the extraction and processing of natural resources, and more along those lines. But the like is also otherwise to be found in the literature of socialism. The literature of the socialist utopians from the eighteenth and the start of the nineteenth century is full of often grandiose ideas and ingenious proposals. Extraordinary amounts of spirit and intelligence is squandered here, much is excellently dreamt up on paper! Some of it has also found its realisation over the course of time, if not perhaps in the scope and in the way that the speculating authors had imagined it.

But fairly all of the preconditions for the Bolshevists' plans are lacking in Russia today, and specifically they have as a result of ignoring their intellectual necessities partly destroyed them themselves. So, when they came to power, they encouraged the workers to pose practically as lords of their factories, but without taking over economic responsibility. And the result? The factory-owners could not stand this and the factories fell into ruin! The workers were simply not in a position to lead them autonomously, they were not and also did not want to be entrepreneurs. More still. Part of the workers—and curiously: precisely a great part of the skilled workers—also upped and left. In the Bolshevists' own publications one can read that a great percentage of the skilled workers downright fled the factories and made their way to the countryside in order to scrape a living as petty craftsworkers.

Over the course of four years of Bolshevist rule, the cities of Russia have shrunk by over a quarter of their total population, and in the countryside the yields of the land are diminishing more and more. From the dictatorship of the proletariat, which barely exists formally anymore, one is come to the factual subjugation of the proletariat, and from the "strangulation", to speak with Bukharin, of the capitalist business-owners to the cultivation of a bureaucracy that barely any other country has to show in terms of its relative size in the state and in industry.

I do not want to get lost in petty details here. It is not my intention to malign the character of the Bolshevists, I am only addressing the flaws in Bolshevism, because its doctrine and methods today are important questions of dispute within socialism. But the facts that I am emphasising in summary form one finds emphasised within the Bolshevist literature itself, they constitute there the object of lively discussions, because one fears their consequences. Further, it is well-known that the Bolshevists have created new capitalists and are attracting foreign ones into their country. With all their political power, they are simply not the masters of things. One thing they certainly can do: relying on their guards, they can suppress and gag where it suits them. Terrorism is still exercised unweakened. But Asiastic despots and African sultans understood how to do that too. Misery is constantly growing in Russia, the suppression of all political freedom continues. No socialist paper of another tendency may appear, the bourgeois papers may not appear at all, only Bolshevist papers are tolerated. There is also no freedom of assembly for those who think differently. The free economic creative force that is simply a necessity for Russia if it is to recover somewhat has been killed off.

A curious piece of repetition of the old tsarist despotism. It is said of Nicholas I, who lived in the middle of the previous century and was the bastion of European reaction, that when the railways emerged and he now also wanted to have one from Moscow to St. Petersburg, he let himself be brought a map and drew a straight line: That is how the railway shall be built! It is still called the Nikolai Railway even today. Naturally, it cost a tremendous amount. He had paid no heed to soil conditions, bogs, etc., but as the Tsar willed it, so it had to be done.—An element of this spirit also lies in N. Ulyanov Lenin. The consequence is increasing economic disintegration.

Everywhere where there is no ordered legal relationship, where uncertainty prevails in respect of the law, where one does not know today which laws will be in force tomorrow, there devastation takes place. And what we hear about Russia today, about that appalling starvation of entire millions, is in part likewise a consequence of this experimenting-around. Albeit immediately caused by a natural event, over which humanity up to now does not yet have any power: a terrible drought. But one may not forget that even against drought human beings are still not quite defenceless. Where the ground is sufficiently fertilised and intensively tilled, there it is more capable of resistance to drought than where it lacks dung and cultivation is only superficial. But where a people, and particularly an agrarian people (since Russia is after all overwhelmingly farmland), where farmers do not have the certainty that they will keep their land, that they will have their harvest left to them, they will indeed cultivate superficially, they will not put anything into the soil. As a result of this fact, e.g., Asia Minor, which earlier was once a downright paradise in fertility, is precisely on the Western side, under the arbitrary rule of the Turkish pashas and under the arbitrary Turkish taxation system, the tax paid in kind [*Naturalsteuer*], silted up for the most part. And regrettably we have the same picture in Russia. In a fearsome way the consequences of misrecognising economic laws reveal themselves, of the material and intellectual, or specifically mental conditions of economic life and the functions of the bearers of the economy at a certain stage of development. One has let the great estates, which in part were very rationally cultivated and delivered great surpluses in products, be divided among the farmers. What was the consequence? The surpluses ceased. Now one cannot make the system, the party responsible for everything. In a revolution, many things also happen against the will of the revolutionaries themselves. But to lower the unavoidable excesses to the lowest possible level, and to get as soon as possible to states

of affairs that conformed to the need to reconstruct economic life, was required the cooperation of all who place themselves on the ground of the legal situation that the revolution of February 1917 had created. That one brought about the opposite under the delusion that all that mattered was having the power to then—as Bukharin said—once the whole of bourgeois political economy has been "strangled", start again anew, that could only have such fragmentations as a result. That is how a child can act when it is playing with its box of toy bricks. But the idea that one can treat in this way the conditions of existence of a people of millions upon millions is caesarist insanity, regardless of whether it comes from a crowned potentate or from revolutionaries. It could take root among the Bolshevists only because the fundamental idea of their doctrine is a thoroughly wrongly-interpreted, immeasurably coarsened Marxism.

To this the following is also to be said:

Bolshevism has met with many critics, and it might have seemed appropriate to cite some of them. However, so as not to attract the accusation of partisanship, I have shied away from doing so at this point. There is only one work that I believe I should pay tribute to. It is the little book by N. Gefimov [*M.O. — actually M. A. Efimov*], *On the Sociology of Bolshevism*.[26] The author, a Russian, who has also lived through the first years of the Bolshevists' rule in the former tsardom, shows the inherent connections between Bolshevism and the movement of the revolutionary terrorists of Tsarist Russia, which was a movement not of the working class, but of classless intellectuals, and whose tendency to outdo one another in their radicalism can be understood from the political state of affairs in Russia. In this way, it could happen that the Marxian theory, once it had reached Russia, underwent so—one must say, *brutal* an interpretation.

In fact, Bolshevism is a specifically Russian phenomenon, to be understood in the context of the conditions that have long prevailed in Russia, where under an absolutist régime the greatest coercive means of oppression have been customary. It is to be understood, but it is not yet for that reason at all worth imitating. It is the example of the pernicious effects of a fateful flaw in one's thinking, which manifests in the belief in the omnipotence of raw force, in the misrecognition of the fundamental laws of societal existence, and in the disregard for the organic principle in the development of human societies when they have emerged from savagery.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Karl Marx – Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 739.
2. [Ed. B.—How little Marx was in agreement with the interpretation that Lafargue gave his insights emerges from his letter to Friedrich Engels of 11 November 1882. There Marx writes to his friend that Lafargue in reality is a student of the Russian Bakunin, and angrily says: "Longuet [Marx's other son-in-law] the last Proudhonist and Lafargue the last Bakuninist! *Que le diable les emporte*!"]
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–48* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 504.
4. Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–83* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 95.
5. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35*, p. 11.
6. Pavel Borisovich Axelrod (1850–1928), Russian socialist activist, initially a supporter of *Narodnik* agrarian socialism, then later co-founder of Emancipation of Labour [*Osvobozhdeniye Truda*], the first Marxist group in Russia, editor of *Iskra* (1900–1905), and prominent member of the Menshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party led by Julius Martov. Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856–1918), Russian political philosopher, sociologist, and historian of social thought, co-founder of Emancipation of Labour and *Iskra*, initially Bolshevik then later a Menshevik after a split with Vladimir Lenin. Vera Ivanovna Zasulich (1851–1919), Russian revolutionary activist and author, first a *Narodnik*, then later a Menshevik, translator and extensive correspondent of Karl Marx, ultimately an opponent of the 1917 October Revolution.
7. Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov (1813–1887), Russian publicist and literary critic, scholarly editor of Alexander Pushkin's works, correspondent of Karl Marx.
8. Karl Schapper (1812–1870), German socialist and labour leader, follower of Wilhelm Weitling and close ally of Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini, Chartist leader Julian Harney, and revolutionary socialist Auguste Blanqui, rival of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Communist League, later instrumental to gaining trade-unionist support for the International Workingmen's Association. Johann August Ernst von Willich (1810–1878), Prussian army officer and republican, later communist, ally of Schapper in the left faction of the Communist League against Marx and Engels, later newspaper editor and major-general in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

9. Sergey Gennadiyevich Nechayev (1847–1882), Russian philosopher and revolutionary, associated with communism and nihilism, accused by Karl Marx of advocating "barracks communism", whose proto-Bolshevik views became synonymous with an authoritarian-sectarian radicalism.
10. Now known by a different title. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men's Association: Report and Documents Published by Decision of the Hague Congress of the International', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 23: Marx and Engels 1871–74* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), p. 454.
11. [Ed. B.—The legal limitation of working time.] Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35*, p. 300.
12. Ibid., pp. 9–10.
13. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', p. 87.
14. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35*, p. 750.
15. Ibid., p. 10.
16. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 37: Karl Marx – Capital, Volume III* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), p. 806.
17. Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Part One', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 29: Marx 1857–61* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 263.
18. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35*, p. 10.
19. Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeni Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism: A Popular Explanation of the Program of the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks)* (London: The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922), §54.
20. Ibid., §49.
21. Leon Trotsky, 'The Internal and External Tasks of the Soviet Power', in Leon Trotsky, *The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, vol. 1: How the Revolution Armed* (New York, NY: New Park, 1979).
22. Ibid.
23. Friedrich von Sallet, *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Breslau: Verlag August Schulz, 1845), p. 413.
24. Friedrich Engels, 'Anti-Dühring', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 25: Engels* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), pp. 169–70.
25. Karl Marx, 'Draft Plan for Section III of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–48* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 578.
26. Mark Abramovich Efimov, *Die Soziologie des Bolschewismus: Mit Bezugnahme auf das Problem der Internationale* (Berlin: Verlaggenossenschaft "Freiheit", 1920).

CHAPTER 11

The Nearest Possible Realisations of Socialism

The world that Marx knew and the world today—The proletariat at the time of Marx and the working class on the eve of the world war—Improvements achieved through law and organisation—The organisations of the business-owners—The economy during the war—So-called war socialism—The German Revolution and the dire situation of the German economy—The new Republic in a struggle for its existence—The assaults by those misled by Bolshevism paralyse the creative force of the Republic—The election results compel the socialists to enter coalition with bourgeois parties—Nevertheless socialist realisations are possible—The various ways to socialisation under the compulsion of financial need—Socialisation through social policy—No great leap, but many significant transitions—Economy of volition guarantees achievement of what one desires.

The author of this work is accused of the following statement: "The final goal is nothing, the movement is everything!" Yet it has not occurred to me to come out with so clueless a statement. In reality, at the time (early 1898), I retorted in a response to the accusation that in my essays there is almost never any talk of the final goal of socialism, that I have for what one commonly calls the "final goal of socialism" extraordinarily little inclination and interest. This goal, whatever it might be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything. I confessed a personal lack of interest, but I

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was a long way from establishing an objective guiding principle with a claim to universal validity.

But this statement was conceived in this way, and prompted a certain uproar. Which particular circumstances had brought this about can remain undiscussed here. But so much should be remarked, that under other conditions than those that prevailed at the time, barely anyone would have paused over it. For in substance it says nothing essentially different than what is expressed in the passages that Marx included in 1871 in the Address he wrote to the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association about the civil war in France:

> The working class […] have no ready-made Utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have […] but to set free elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant.[1]

With me, the cited statement was followed by the addition:

> And by movement I mean both the general movement of society, i.e., social progress, and the political and economic agitation and organisation to bring about this progress.[2]

Now it would be absurd to wish to awaken the impression that between the meaning of Marx's statement and my remark there is absolutely no difference of meaning whatsoever. Such a difference is indisputably present. It consists of the fact that Marx saw the prospective new society coming about more quickly, and the collapse of the old one taking place more rapidly, than me, and based on this assumption put things in a different way. But the idea that the movement and the struggles arising from it are the decisive factor and that everything comes down to them is the *leitmotif* with him as well.

Since Marx authored the aforenamed work, a good half-century has rolled by, and the question can be raised whether he did not after all believe that the complete collapse of the old society would not take quite so long. Several things speak in favour of this, and in any case the question is worth enquiring into for the sake of correctly evaluating various of Marx's judgments, which belong to that period of his life. But for our

examination, it suffices to establish the fact that the founder of scientific socialism here explains bluntly that the coming new society would only be the result of "a *series of historic processes*, *transforming circumstances and men*".

When Marx wrote his main work, *Capital*, the European world was situated politically as well as economically in the wake of democratically-oriented liberalism. Constitutions were reformed in its vein, restrictions on the press and the right of association were mitigated or abolished, franchises for the parliaments were extended. In England, free trade had been victorious and, it seemed, from there would run its victorious course throughout the entire capitalist world. Tariff rates were lowered, and trade contracts with most-favoured-nation clauses were signed, which represented a preliminary stage towards complete free trade. The expected era of world peace was certainly severely impaired by the three German wars, but the damage they caused to economic life was not all too deeply-felt. Capitalist production went through times of crisis, but remained in a state of rising development; the wealth of the capitalist countries grew, world traffic in goods steadily increased, the cities and industrial centres expanded, the industrial and commercial enterprises grew in size, and in connection with that the industrial workers, the proletariat, also significantly grew in number. But the liberal epoch came to a stuttering halt with the end of the 1870s, around the time when Marx was forced by illness to lay down his pen. A wave of protectionist reaction flooded over the world and drew after it colonial-political endeavours of an imperialist nature; the relations between the major powers took a turn for the worse, the formation of great-power coalitions began, and with it an era of competitive armament at sea and on land. But at the same time, the workers' movement experienced a new upswing, the socialist International was called into existence again, and in a comparatively short time exceeded the old International in regard to the number of affiliated countries and the internal strength of its country sections.

Under the influence of all these events, the world of the modern developed countries took on a different physiognomy than Marx had known and could predict. An intellectual reaction in regard to the assessment of relations between peoples and interior security possessed the bourgeois classes. They did not dare to wish for war and believed less and less in the permanent preservation of peace. After the failure of the Bismarckian emergency law [*Ausnahmegesetz*] against Social Democracy, they had forfeited their belief in the possibility of suppressing it through violent means,

and still saw themselves forced back to their defensive lines in the face of the growing workers' movement.[3] In Germany, the effect was an increasingly weaker stance of the bourgeoisie towards the government, and ever new attempts by the latter to make the workers defect from Social Democracy through legislative concessions to them, although this did not succeed. The main piece of the concessions, the workers' insurance introduced by Bismarck, had rather the opposite effect. It gave the workers too little to materially satisfy them, but pushed in its social consequences far beyond what Bismarck had wanted. It created in the organs of insurance (health insurance funds, advisors to accident insurance and disability insurance) an officialdom of the working class, which over the course of time placed a great wealth of expertly knowledgable personalities at its disposal for organisational and representative purposes of a different nature. The industrial courts worked in the same direction through the institution of the observers from among the body of workers. Supported by these institutions, in Germany the workers' trade unions spread in the final decade of the nineteenth and further in the twentieth century in an unforeseen way, so that ultimately they almost equalled the English trade unions in their number of members, but even outdid them in their internal constitution and their effective harnessing of forces. In parallel with this, the political organisation of the working class and its press grew, and the number of its representatives in the state and municipal parliaments multiplied. A network of legal and free representative bodies of the workers covered the country, and every city of any significance whatsoever received a *Volkshaus* [social-cultural centre or union hall], created and maintained by the workers' movement itself, as a gathering-point, and a workers' secretariat, where the worker gained information about the social laws that concerned them, but at the same time also through the nature of things was made aware of the political and economic organisations of their class. Apart from that, the new century saw a significant spread and strengthening of the workers' consumer cooperatives, whose leaders and employees still substantially increased the army of officials of the working class.

But on the other side, the business-owners had also not remained unorganised. In the purely economic domain, in all industries cartels and syndicates had been founded in order to set limits to the pressure of competition on prices, and in many cases they also went on to have a regulative effect on production where overproduction had set in or was threatening to do so, i.e., to temporarily systematically restrict production. An even closer alliance of capitalist business enterprise took place in the shape

of trust-style associations and fusions or concerns of major industry. In turn, for resistance against the trade unions and other coalitions by the workers, business-owners', or rather employers' associations had been created, whose number eventually became so large that the businesses represented by them employed significantly more workers than were organised into trade unions. But despite their number and their financial power, their resistant force towards the workers was still limited. The number of cases grew where they considered it wiser to sign collective wage agreements with the organised workers than to one-sidedly dictate their wages to them, and in the trade union statistics, the number of cases where wage movements, etc., lead without the aid of strikes or lockouts to wage settlements is significantly greater than the number of cases where it comes to a pitting of strengths against one another in industrial struggle.

So, in Germany on the eve of the war, the social picture of industry in various points presented itself substantially differently than Marx had predicted in *Capital*. In the chapter "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" it had read:

> Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation [Ed. B.—the concentration of enterprises], grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.[4]

In reality, the number of capital magnates had still consistently risen despite the strong concentrating movement of economic enterprises. So in Prussia—there are so far no Reich statistics about this—the number of census-respondents with a wealth of over half a million in 1895, the year of the first tally of wealth statistics, until 1914 had *increased* by over 50 percent, and the *stratum* of the highest income classes had grown even more strongly in size. But the *stratum* of the middle income classes had also grown more strongly than the total population, and if the situation that the working class had reached still also left much to be desired, then it was still economically and sociolegally better than it had been at the time when Marx wrote those lines. Major categories of workers had won the nine-hour working day, and few worked more than ten hours. Wage income had risen significantly in nominal terms, slightly less in its

purchasing power, but all the same not insubstantially above its previous level. Industrial ordinances, industrial courts, wage agreements, or rather pay offices [*Tarifämter*], insurance laws, public and free trade-union employment exchanges and related institutions had, in conjunction with the right to organise, had the effect that, instead of degradation, a raising of the legal status of the worker vis-à-vis the business-owner and their officials had entered in. Hardship was still there in certain *strata* of the workers' world, but it had not increased. The signs for this are, among other things, the increase in consumption of breadfruit and various other semi-luxury foods, as well as textile goods per head of population; further, the fall in mortality rates and the significant increase of marriages. Certainly, with the latter went hand-in-hand a continuous decline in births. However, this too is, as is well-known to everyone who is knowledgable about population science, a sign of declining mass poverty. The rise in marriages in the epoch of advanced capitalism disproved the conclusion likewise derived by socialists from the phenomena of the epoch of rising capitalist production, that capitalism would lead to the complete dissolution of the family among the proletariat.

All the same, the mechanism of the capitalist production process had not remotely brought about these effects automatically all by itself. Certainly, it was also not entirely uninvolved in this, in various respects it had created the economic preconditions for this social improvement. But as is already visible from the enumeration above, this improvement was itself for the greatest part the fruit of *social* countervailing action, on the one hand by legislation and administration, which the workers affected to an ever greater degree by means of political pressure, and on the other hand by the direct action of the economic organisations of the workers themselves. But whatever the forces were that had shaped the picture differently, it was in respect of the class structure and the social situation of the classes not what Marx had predicted. And if, so as not to present Marx in the wrong light, it must be remarked that he had after all only indicated a *tendency*, which already included the possibility that the reality could bring about a divergent development, then still this divergence was indeed a fact, and with that it was already indicated that further development too would not take shape according to that schema.

To this also came the fact that in the countryside the development of classes had taken place along completely different lines than in industry, commerce, and transport. Here, there was nothing whatsoever to be detected of an absorption of the medium and small enterprises by the

larger ones. On the contrary, they evinced a greater resilience than them. This too again to a high degree through the use of social antidotes, of which in the first place is to be mentioned the highly-developed rural cooperative system, whose full exploitation makes almost all technical advances accessible to the medium-sized and smaller farmers that are at the disposal of the larger landowners, equipped with considerable capital. But there are also other moments, which lie in production itself, which have as their consequence a different development in the size of enterprises in agriculture than takes place in industry. Of these should be mentioned only the significant circumstance that agricultural production is essentially *organic* production, directed at the cultivation of animals and plants, and not *mechanical* production, the processing of dead material.

The war has fundamentally changed nothing in this course of social development. It temporarily brought tremendous shifts in the occupations of the classes and sexes. For the millions of male persons who were used in the field, in the military bases, and as garrisons in the occupied territories, female persons had to fill the gaps left in industry, commerce, and transport; the professional activity of women underwent a significant expansion. Industry was forced to adjust its production to war needs. For the manufacture of guns, ammunition, and explosives, the existing works were expanded, new ones were built in addition, and many factories that had previously manufactured products of a completely different nature were converted to the production of such war materiel. Further, commerce in foodstuffs and other important commodity goods were put under official controls for reasons of restricting consumption, which had become necessary through the cutting-off of imports, for which purpose centres for the various requisite commodities were created that regulated their release to consumers. This was made dependent on proof of need, and articles for daily need (bread, meat, milk, etc.) were rationed and could be sold by traders only in exchange for stamps; also, maximum prices were established for them, beyond which no payment was to be demanded of the buyers. For the centralisation of the procurement of certain manufactured products, war societies [*Kriegsgesellschaften*] were founded under the auspices of the authorities, which were supposed to have the effect of saving false costs in production.

Everything that I have just outlined was at the time praised by many as socialist or as the realisation of socialist ideas, and after all also has points of overlap with the fundamental socialist principle of the regulation of production and circulation under the perspective of the communal

interest and the highest level of economic efficiency. But such a form of consolidation of means and the subordination of production and commerce to the momentary interest of the greater whole has often existed in times of war, and if one wants to call them socialism, then this kind of socialism would be pretty much as old as war itself. One has christened it war socialism, and in one respect not without justification, in that it namely did not survive the war. It did not do so previously, and has also not been the case in Germany this time. And specifically here precisely that fell away the fastest which was most worthy of preservation: the protection of consumers against being overwhelmed by profiteering [*Überwucherung*]. Of course, it had already in the final years of the war strongly forfeited its efficacy. For many articles, the establishment of maximum prices was every time the signal that they disappeared from the traders' public displays and were only to be acquired round the back—through "clandestine trade"—at extortionate prices. In the early days, the patriotic fervour that had come over people's temperaments ensured that most people willingly complied with the provisions that had become necessary in the general interest. But once it receded, step by step profiteering and its support by the thoughtlessness of some and lack of principle in others gained the upper hand to such an extent that ultimately it counted as stupidity not to demand prices that the buyers who were capable of paying would still tolerate, and not to feed oneself to the extent that one's means permitted. Social morality was already strongly shattered when, with the collapse of its army, the *Kaiserreich* itself also disintegrated.

The Revolution could only temporarily delay the further escalation of the evil that had set in. Its natural enemies, the reactionaries of the various grades, had not yet recovered from the terror that had paralysed them, when already the agitators for a council dictatorship, equipped by the Bolshevist government of Russia on the grandest scale with money and other propaganda means, committed all their forces to undermine the reputation of the young Republic among the people. Of the great majority of those who participated as fighters in the uprisings that were orchestrated in 1919 in various localities in Germany, one may well say: They knew not what they did. That the subjection of Germany to the commandments of a council dictatorship was flatly impossible, anyone could have told themselves who even only knew in passing its economic situation and social structure. The means by which the quite overwhelmingly agrarian Russia was sent to its perdition, the so highly-developed industrialised Germany would have tolerated even less. The more highly-developed

organism is much more sensitive in the face of interventions by force in its functional life than the lower-lying one. All the same, as a socialist one will have to mourn the fact that the period of rule by the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* [Council of People's Deputies], which after all in essence was likewise a rule by dictatorship, even if, it should be said to its honour, a liberal [*freiheitlich*], thoroughly humane, and broadmindedly-wielded dictatorship, was not more efficaciously utilised in an economic-policy respect.[5] One could have, e.g., without notable resistance from the bourgeois classes, who were happy enough that the working class that had just come to power did not have it in for them, and without any damage to the national economy, laid down a far further-reaching right of the state to land and natural resources by decree than actually was done. But, forced into the necessity of having to defend the Republic against the violent assaults from the left, burdened with the many tasks, which brooked no delay, that accrued to it out of the concern for the accommodation and dissolution of the million-strong army that was flooding back, the uncertain circumstances in the East and Northeast, the armistice demands of the victorious powers, and many internal administrative affairs, it hardly had a chance during that period, which lasted barely three months, to consult on and elaborate an ordinance for this purpose, which would have interfered in rights of the most various kinds, since over the limitation of the rights of the Republic as a whole and the individual states, which had themselves also become republics, there still prevailed far-reaching differences of opinion, which were waiting to be resolved by the constitutive *Nationalversammlung* [National Assembly].

Apart from this, precisely in relation to the questions of the transformation of private into public property, it was not free in its resolutions. According to the entire conduct of the victorious powers towards defeated Germany, one had to count on the possibility that these would reserve in the peace treaty for certain cases the right to seize public property, and in fact this happened in the peace diktat of Versailles. Already the first article of the section that deals with financial questions—article 248—establishes that the claims on Germany awarded by the diktat to the Allies apply as "a first charge upon all the assets and revenues of the German Empire and its constituent States".

With the convention of the *Nationalversammlung* elected on 19 January 1919, the government of the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten*, which consisted exclusively of social democrats, came to an end. After the adoption of a law about temporary Reich power, the *Nationalversammlung*

elected on 10 February 1919 with 277 of 379 votes the social democrat Fritz Ebert as President of the German Republic, but the first cabinet was a coalition government comprising 7 social democrats, 3 members of *Zentrum* [Centre Party], 3 members of the Democratic Party, and one independent minister who was closely-aligned with the Democratic Party.[6] From then on, Germany has only had coalition governments, which with the exception of the period from June 1920 to June 1921, where the government consisted exclusively of representatives of bourgeois parties, were composed of social-democratic and bourgeois ministers. It is not unthinkable, but not very likely, that the elections of the coming years will return a majority of social democrats to the Reichstag. On the contrary, the elections of June 1920 for the first Reichstag of the German Republic resulted in a relative drop in socialist votes relative to bourgeois ones. While in the elections to the *Nationalversammlung* 13,827,000 socialist votes were cast against 16,574,000 bourgeois ones, the relationship now was 10,952,000 socialist against 15,065,000 bourgeois votes. From nearly 45.5 percent, the share of socialist votes had fallen to 42.1 percent.

Since the strongest of the socialist parties in Germany, the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, called the Party of the Majority Socialists [*Mehrheitssozialisten*] for short, has placed itself on the foundation of government by the popular representative assembly elected on the basis of the general, equal, and direct franchise of the adult population, so long as this relative voteshare persists, only so much socialism will be realised by a legislative route as that for which socialists succeed in achieving by the route of negotiation or demonstration the assent of the more progressive elements of the bourgeois parties.

That does not necessarily need to be *a small amount*. However one imagines the completed socialist state of affairs, still nobody can be in doubt about the fact that it cannot be reached through a great leap, but can only be the result of a whole sequence of measures that are implemented with interstitial gaps lasting a greater or lesser amount of time. This the great founders of scientific socialism have acknowledged on various occasions. But none of these measures are, none of them *can be* irreconcilable with the given state of economic-social development at the relevant point in time. If it is, then it will simply fail, and damage the socialists who demanded or compelled it more than the bourgeois parties. But for those measures that were reconcilable with the achieved state of economic-social development, certain wings of the non-socialist parties

have almost always let themselves been won over, however strongly they intervene in the rights and sphere of influence of property.

So a very precise penetration is necessary into the anticipated effects of economic and social-political measures. The compilations of socialist measures that Marx and Engels elaborated on various occasions—at the end of the *Communist Manifesto*, as well as the programme of *Demands of the Communist Party in Germany* after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848—for the case that the workers seized control of political power, can today be taken into consideration only with this reservation. Parts of these demands were brought to realisation by bourgeois movements and parliaments; others presupposed the situation of a political revolution carried to its furthest extremes and a long since non-existent simplicity of conditions, and again yet others harbour problems of which their authors were not aware and also could not have been aware given that simplicity of conditions. To this belongs, for example, the demand in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.[7]

In the face of the highly-developed and highly-ramified credit system of our times it is of downright childish simplicity. Likewise the demand of 1848: "mortgages on peasant lands shall be declared the property of the state", where today the mass of these mortgages lies in the hands of public and semi-public institutions (savings banks, insurance companies, etc.). The demand in the *Communist Manifesto* for "abolition of all right of inheritance" is weakened by its authors in the *Programme* from the 1848 Revolution to "the right of inheritance to be curtailed", and later Marx calls it in his polemic against the Bakuninists a Saint-Simonian foible.[8] With the progress of society, certain demands take on a different appearance, and the idea that underpins them must find practical application in a different form. In the work towards socialist realisations, a far more elaborate specialisation is necessary. This makes the advances that can respectively be made appear smaller than some of those carried out earlier, but for that they are made on a significantly greater scale than these.

After through the radical political transformations that the war had in its aftermath the state-political legal demands of Social Democracy in Germany and in most other countries have substantially come to realisation, it is now a matter of bringing the socialist idea in economic life to

ever stronger practical application, endeavours for which today the collective term *socialisation* [*Sozialisierung*] is used. It is tempting to replace it with the German term *Vergesellschaftung* [societalisation]. But this does not quite mean the same thing. With it, one thinks almost exclusively of the transformation of private business enterprises or groups of these into public property, managed on behalf of the general community [*Allgemeinheit*]. But the concept of socialisation has a further scope. It is also applied to the transformation of rights to the enterprise and about its operation. And that is of no minor significance for the present problem.

For the transformation of enterprises or industries into societal property, aside from local branches of enterprise, the most conventional form was nationalisation [*Verstaatlichung*], in which it is irrelevant whether the state in question is a state or an empire. Which non-economic concerns today stand in the way of nationalisation in Germany was outlined above; but also for other reasons not only bourgeois economists but also socialists object to giving the go-ahead for nationalisation to be generally applied. One harbours concerns about surrendering industry to bureaucratisation, and also does not want to multiply state officialdom to an unlimited extent.

These concerns are not entirely unjustified. Whatever one can accuse capitalist production of, one thing remains indisputable and was also unreservedly acknowledged by Marx: It was a tremendous factor of technical-economic progress, of the economisation of material and labour. It is now doubted that bureaucratised production would deliver the same achievements—not only because with it the drive towards sweeping improvements in technology is not the same, but also because the risk-taking [*Wagemut*] of the business-owner ceases. It is not, as one has assumed in socialist circles, the size of the enterprise, or rather the plant, that decides about its readiness for socialisation. In the cited chapter of his main work, Marx speaks about the "point where … [c]entralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour […] become incompatible with their capitalist integument".[9] But this point is in no way the same in all branches of production. Hence today it depends entirely, where we stand closer to these matters, on finding objective distinguishing features for the suitability of economic enterprises for socialisation, and for the best forms of it. Much has already happened in this respect. The civil construction consultant [*Stadtbaurat*] Alphons Horten, who came out of practical employment, and who was for six years a director in the Thyssen concern and then manager of the large de-Wendel works, gives in his work, which

is very worth reading, *Socialisation and Reconstruction*, on the basis of his practical experience a classification of business-enterprises under the aspect of their suitability for socialisation, and shows what can be done to avoid the evils of bureaucratisation when carrying this out.[10] Decisive is, in his view, the question of whether the branch of production in question has reached the stage where management is essentially only routine work now, and whether path-breaking innovations have become unlikely or not. Another distinguishing feature is, in the view of the author of this work, given in the nature of the product, whether it serves a major need that is present evenly among wide circles of the population, or specifically, has a turnover that is or is not independent of taste and fashion. So that thus the industries for initial processing of raw materials and those of semi-finished manufacturing would seem to be more suited to socialisation than those of finished products, which is also supported by the fact that they have fallen prey to a far higher degree to concentration into large enterprises than the latter. One example for this is provided by the textile industry, where spinning is asymmetrically more strongly centralised than weaving and hosiery.

So it is not impossible to ascertain the preconditions for a scientific-systematic following of steps for socialisations, which raise the problem out of the sphere of uncritical experimenting-around and would prevent blunders. The same applies to the stages of socialisation. It can in many domains prove necessary and is also very well possible to convert the latter by degrees into reality. What is even at stake at all in doing so? Its purpose can be summarised as the achievement of specifically economic and generally social effects as well as the change of the legal situation of the people who are active in the economy. In the first respect, it aims for the greatest production of material commodity goods under the greatest possible economy in tangible assets and human labour; in the second, for the most comprehensive possible implementation of the fundamental principle of cooperativity in the labour process and in the regulation of the remuneration of labour as well as in the raising of the legal status of the persons active in the economy as employees and workers. All far-reaching measures of legislation and administration that are directed to the realisation of these goals belong to the domain of socialisation. The experts now agree, and the Socialisation Commission composed by the socialist *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* declared expressly in its first report, that it is

> … conscious that the societalisation of the means of production can only ensue in an organic construction that will take a longer time, …

and after it established that the first precondition of all economic reorganisation is the *revival of production*, and the economic situation of Germany demands "peremptorily the resuming of export industry and foreign trade", it further proclaimed its view

> … that for these branches of industry the previous organisation must presently still be retained. Likewise, the restarting of industry demands the maintenance and expansion of credit circulation, and with that the undisturbed function of the credit banks …

Also in the interest of food provisions, it is "not proposed to interfere in the prior property and operating conditions of farming arrangements". Here, "through measures adjusted to agriculture and through the support of cooperatives, *productivity should be raised* and its *intensity be increased*".[11]

The highlighted phrases refer to what was identified above as the specifically *economic* purpose of socialisation.

In the usual course of things, in the capitalist economy the intensification and the higher productivity of labour are brought about by the pressure of competition, which the business-owners exert on one another in their struggle for market share, or rather for turnover. The methods by means of which these are achieved, and which ultimately are nothing more than a saving of human labour, were outlined by Marx in *Capital* in the chapters about the struggle over surplus value, for the struggle over market share is part of the struggle over surplus value. But this does not come about under all circumstances. Where monopoly conditions develop, and these are present everywhere where demand for commodities exceeds supply, the drive of business-owners for intensification of labour appropriately falls and can under some circumstances become entirely dormant. The consequences are more expensive goods and distress among wide circles of the population, so that the questions of raising productivity, specifically of the intensification of production, become objects of a higher social interest. Signs of this are to be detected in various regions as aftereffects of the war.

In Germany, the obligatory payments to the victorious powers have likewise made the saving of labour a social interest. Yet now here, as a result of the shortage of goods, business-enterprises are still lucrative

which in fact in regard to their size and accoutrements have lagged behind the average level of development in production. Hence, their continued existence means economically a waste of labour through production under backward methods of labour and a waste of labour through unnecessary fragmentation of the sites of production [*Produktionsstätten*]. To militate against this, proposals for a reorganisation of the national economy have been elaborated, for which the name *economic planning* [*Planwirtschaft*] has been chosen, and which belong to the domain of socialisation.

The idea of economic planning is linked to measures that in wartime were ordered by the authorities in the face of the economic war necessity at the instigation of, and following elaborate plans by, the imaginative large industrialist Walter Rathenau and the social economist Wichard von Möllendorf, and were implemented in major industries by cartelised production groups under the retention of capitalist surplus economy [*Überschusswirtschaft*] with the American trust as an example.[12] On the basis of Reich legal provisions, associations of business-owners in entire branches of production were to be called into existence, which were to be structured organically according to municipalities and districts, and in the management of which the general community, the business-owners, and the workers and employees are represented through nominated or elected representatives. These managements are supposed to have a far-reaching influence on the organisation, structure, and conduct of industry in the vein of as social as possible an economy, and its centres are to subject imports and exports to regulative provisions in light of the urgency of need and Germany's general economic situation. They are to have the right to shut down useless intermediary links in the economy, and to work towards all improvements in the organisation of production and labour methods that serve the purpose of lowering prices as far as possible. Through the establishment of wage agreements and supplementary ordinances, they are to bring about labour conditions that let labour relations take on the most satisfactory possible form.

Against this plan, which Rudolf Wissell, the first social-democratic Economy Minister of the German Republic, elaborated into a comprehensive system, sharp objections were raised not only by bourgeois theorists and interested parties, but also from the socialist side.[13] Above all, it is accused of preserving the capitalist business-owner and possibly even strengthening their power in practice even further. It stands in the way of the urgently necessary complete socialisation for industries of generally-needed raw materials like coal and iron, and could very easily foster

bureaucratic dispositions and interventions that could damage economic life.

The possibility of such mistakes is not entirely ruled out, but given the multilateral composition of the managements they are not all too likely, provisions that prove to be disadvantageous would not be difficult to change. Likewise it is not obvious why and how these associations, given their democratic composition and their planned constant public control, should still strengthen the power of capitalist business-owners further. It comes down entirely to their composition whether the objection that claims this would prove justified or not, but the idea that underpins this plan is not disproved by this. The same applies to the objection that the planned economic organisation and regulation of production would delay or even hinder the complete socialisation of coal, iron, etc. The resistance that these have to reckon with does not prove to be any weaker where we do not have planned economic associations or something approaching them.

And Germany will have to have something of this kind. The global economic conditions of its national economy and the financial obligations weighing on it make it impossible for it to remain for a longer time in the state of wild competitive anarchy that has followed the abolition of the compulsory institutions of the war years and the first years after it. At the time where I am writing this, the low level of its exchange rate keeps its exports and retroactively its production at such a high level that in contrast to the countries with a high exchange rate it has as good as no unemployment. However, one after the other, these countries are moving towards introducing tariff surcharges and other protectionist measures against competition from countries with a low exchange rate, and the more these measures become generalised, as has already for example been introduced in the United States through acts of legislation, the more the advantage arising from the low exchange rate will dissipate, whereas the disadvantage of the more difficult procurement of adequate means of payment for the purchase of raw materials that Germany itself does not produce and for the payment of its foreign obligations still remains. The transition to sweeping measures for stronger economisation in its national economy then becomes a commandment of self-preservation, and if one does not want to leave this at the mercy of the contingencies and vicissitudes of capitalist competitive warfare, one will have to move to adopt the kinds of measures outlined in the draft proposals for economic planning, even if perhaps not quite so schematically. Now these measures will, if they are taken in hand in the spirit developed above, perhaps not realise socialism *tout court*, but

certainly a significant piece of socialism. For they signify in any case an important step forwards towards societal regulation of production and the elevation of the workers to codetermination [*Mitbestimmung*] in the economic organism. They can be framed so elastically that they leave a wide room for manoeuvre for personal initiative in the economy where this is worth preserving, that is, where it has a creative effect, and not hinder the complete socialisation of the branches of production that are qualified for it, but on the contrary facilitate it.

To reforms in the direction of common economy compels further the financial need of Reich, states, and municipalities, which has risen so tremendously and is still constantly rising. In socialist circles, one has often taken pleasure in straightforwardly calling the public management of branches of the economy—as soon as it is associated with the achievement of surpluses—state or municipal capitalism, and where this was the only or all-dominating purpose of the matter, the name was also justified. But it loses this justification to the degree that in such business-enterprises public utility is the guiding motif, and the social moment in relation to those employed in them steps into the foreground, while by contrast the achievement of surpluses is only aspired to through greater economy in the technical domain, as is ever more strongly the case today. Then, the increasing conversion of private into public enterprises is again, in turn, not socialism *tout court*, but certainly every time a step on the way towards it. And these must and will increase in number.

The financial need of the Republic has become so great that it can hardly be covered any longer through a mixture of direct taxes of the old kind along with consumption taxes and traffic levies. For this reason, and because the owners of tangible assets—of land and landed property, factories, commercial installations, etc.—have made enormous gains through the falling exchange rate at the cost of the general community, there have been loud calls for a direct acquisition of material assets by the Reich, represented especially energetically by Social Democracy. The Republic is to become a co-owner of these assets in the sense that through consignments a certain share of its annual profits is secured for it. A measure that under certain preconditions would put it in a position, through depositing these consignments in the Reichsbank as covering funds for its floating debt, specifically for its issuing of banknotes, to bring about a significant rise in its exchange rate, though this would at the same time also give it a more precise insight into the financial conduct of enterprises, and in this way increase its possibilities for control. These are the reasons that explain the

great, one could say desperate, resistance that landowners and capitalists of all kinds put up against this demand, though this makes its realisation seem all the more worth aspiring to for socialists. For one can say openly, because it is a command of necessity, that this too harbours a piece of socialism, and specifically one that is all the more significant because it would have advantageous effects on the entire domain of political economy, without for that reason stifling legitimate business in any way whatsoever.

The scope of application of the socialist idea is self-evidently not restricted to economic questions in the specific conception of the term, and the questions of property associated with it. It encompasses the entire complex of questions that are of significance for the raising of material welfare, for the achievement of the highest possible intellectual and ethical culture and the legal formation appropriate to it. Here too it is a matter of innovations that, taken individually, are not already socialism, but rather become it through the spirit that pervades them, and their connection with many reforms that are dictated by the same spirit. Starting with the education system in all its gradations, all the way up to the highly-ramified domains of social policy, of legal formations, of social hygiene, and cultural policy it is reserved to socialism to realise reforms that the bourgeois governments and classes have not approached hitherto at all, or only in exceptional cases.

To speak only of social policy, in Germany the Revolution of November 1918 has, in the epoch of the political rule of Social Democracy, brought alongside other significant expansions of workers' protections the proclamation of the industrial maximum working day of eight hours, and again we can appeal to Karl Marx if we call this reform progress towards socialism. The Works Councils Act [*Betriebsrätegesetz*] of 4 February 1920 has a still higher claim to this name.[14] This law, which was created by the legislative *Nationalversammlung*, still suffused with the animating air of the Revolution, gives workers and employees rights within the industrial plants, which at the time when Karl Marx was writing one held to be impossible. All the same, it is not complete, and its effects on the yields of the national economy cannot yet be fully overviewed. But one thing is certain, and is in practice also acknowledged by those workers who bitterly fought against it at its creation under the influence of a certain kind of agitation: It is an element of social policy that, like no other, opens up the possibility for workers and employees to become from bondsmen [*Hörige*] of the industry to participants or consociates [*Genossen*] in the social-legal

conception of the term. However, this could only come about through the successful achievement of the democratic Republic. Certainly, this Republic is only primarily the juristic lever for economic-social emancipation, and not yet this emancipation itself. But in as industrially advanced a country as Germany, with so developed and politically and economically so strongly organised a working class, this lever can only turn in the direction of socialism. This is not remotely affected by the fact that it is not implemented according to a single formula that fits for everything, and not implemented for the entire domain of social life in one go.

36 years ago now, in 1885, the author of this work wrote in the addendum chapter to the explication written by Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue of Marx's introductory statements for the minimum programme of the French Workers' Party, founded in 1880:

> One should really get out of the habit of dreaming about a complete future state; rather, one should adhere firmly to the insight that it will take a fairly long period of development until the principle of socialism has blazed the way in all domains of social life.
>
> Speculatively, in their head, at all times individual people have skipped over certain transitional stages. But always so far, practice has thwarted the plans of such fantasists.
>
> Vague dreaming is the deadly enemy of all concrete thinking. But it is the latter that the working class needs. Without concrete thinking there is no insight into actual conditions, and without this no planned, purposeful action, the main requirement of the emancipation of the working class.[15]

To far higher a degree than I anticipated at the time these sentences have proven themselves a justified admonition, and there would be much still to add to them. After all, my social-economic insight then still left much to be desired. Based on a significant overestimation of certain phenomena in economic life, I considered Western and Central Europe to be far closer to the realisation of socialism than they actually were, and the route towards its realisation to be far simpler than it actually is. Experience has taught us that the distance was significantly greater, but the way is not a simple one at all, indeed quite simply is not a way at all.

But this does not give us any reason to be fainthearted. I may well say: If I look back on what there was at the time, and compare it with what there is today, only then do I see what great, what vast progress has still

taken place in what for the lives of peoples is still a comparatively short space of time. The way is not as simple as it seemed then, but the forces that work to overcome it are an order of magnitude greater than they were too.

From the most various sides, under the application of very different means and methods, an army of workers of all kinds over twenty times larger than it was then is working at the realisation of socialism. What each individual is adding to the whole appears small in relation to the size of the work that is to be accomplished, and the advance of each day seems negligible in comparison to the state of things on the day before. Only once we measure it from a certain distance, from which we can oversee the whole, can we recognise the progress that has been completed. But with the dream of the great leap nothing is lost that would be worth preserving. Young, weak movements may need it so as not to lose courage on the distant road that does not yet let them perceive any social successes. Strong, mature movements that have reached the point of creative activity have no need of it. On the contrary, it can only harm them. Since for them, gauging wrongly becomes all the more fateful. For them, to a high degree the oft-misused phrase of the poet remains fully justified:

> The boundless spirit's mere imagination,
> For pure perfection's heights will strive in vain.
> To achieve great things, we must be self-confined.[16]

For their immediate struggle, stronger movements become accustomed to taking into view only those of their goals that are possible at the given stage of development for their immediate struggle. But in this economy of *volition* [*Wollen*] lies the surest guarantee of *achieving what one desires* [*Erreichung des Gewollten*].

Notes

1. Karl Marx, 'The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870–71* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), p. 335.
2. Eduard Bernstein, 'The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution: 2. The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy, *Neue Zeit*, 19 January 1898', in Henry Tudor and J.M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and*

Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 169.

3. Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck (1815–1898), German conservative statesman, Minister-President of Prussia and strategic author of German unification, creator of the first modern welfare state as part of a determined campaign against the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Karl Marx – Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 750.
5. The *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* [Council of People's Deputies] was the interim government that took power in Germany as a result of the 1918 November Revolution. Originally a coalition between the SPD and the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), it became an SPD-only government in late December 1918 after the USPD members resigned as a result of fighting between government troops and revolting left-radical military units. In February 1919, it formally ceded power to the newly-created democratic government that emerged from the January 1919 election to the *Nationalversammlung* [National Assembly].
6. Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925), German social-democratic activist and politician on the right wing of the SPD, first Reich President in the Weimar Republic from 1919 until his death. *Zentrum*, a continuation of the pre-WW11 Christian-democratic party, and the German Democratic Party [*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*], a left-liberal successor to the Progressive People's Party [*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei*], formed the pro-Republic "Weimar Coalition" alongside the SPD.
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–48* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 505.
8. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Demands of the Communist Party in Germany', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 7: Marx and Engels 1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), pp. 3–4.
9. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35*, p. 750.
10. Alphons Horten, *Sozialisierung und Wiederaufbau* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1920).
11. Sozialisierungskommission, *Vorläufiger Bericht der Sozialisierungskommission über die Frage der Sozialisierung des Kohlenbergbaus* (Berlin: Decker, 1919).
12. Walther Rathenau (1867–1922), German industrialist, author, and liberal political philosopher, DDP member and Foreign Minister (1922), developed a model of economic central planning that influenced figures as diverse as Leon Trotsky and Albert Speer, assassinated by members of the extreme-right *Organisation Consul*. Wichard Georg Otto von Möllendorf (1881–1937), German engineer and economic theorist, developed a model of mixed-economic central planning based on a joint system of works councils and specialist committees.

13. Rudolf Wissell (1869–1962), German social-democratic politician, one of the departed USPD members' replacements in the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* in December 1918, Minister for the Economy (1919) and Minister for Labour (1928–1930) during the Weimar Republic.
14. The 1920 Works Councils Law [*Betriebsrätegesetz*] introduced a legal obligation for enterprises with over 20 employees to permit the election of works councils. The law met with considerable resistance from workers, who resented the omission of co-determination rights for business employees, and from business-owners, who classed any supervisory role for workers as an infringement of business secrets. Despite a massive protest by the USPD and the Communist Party of Germany [*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*] in January 1920, which was brutally put down by Prussian police, the law was passed in February 1920 and remained in effect until it was suspended in January 1934 under Nazi rule.
15. Eduard Bernstein, *Gesellschaftliches und Privat-Eigentum: ein Beitrag zur Erläuterung des sozialistischen Programms, mit Benutzung der Schrift "Le programme du Parti Ouvrier" von Jules Guesde und Paul Lafargue* (Berlin: Verlag des "*Vorwärts*", 1891).
16. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Nature and Art', in Goethe, *Selected Poetry*, David Luke (tr.) (London: Penguin, 2005).

PART II

Writings on Ideology and Socialist Theory

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CHAPTER 12

The Social Doctrine of Anarchism

Neue Zeit 10/1(12, 14), 10/2(45–7, 51–2) (December 1891, July–September 1892), pp. 358–65, 421–8, 589–96, 618–26, 657–66, 772–8, 813–19.[1]

Alongside the social-democratic movement, which is growing from day to day, there is in almost all countries where it is represented another movement as well, which likewise aims for a total change in societal conditions, but repudiates both the means as well as the fundamental principles of the former: that of anarchism. Although it is not especially strong anywhere, it is at its strongest in the Romance countries, has taken root here and there in England and the United States—albeit certainly less among the indigenous than among the immigrant population—counts members in various sections of the Slavic family of peoples, and also is tentatively propagated in Germany too. Although the latter has hitherto been without notable success, its zeal there has been all the greater. Whether the recent secession of the so-called Opposition from the German Social-Democratic Party will help this propaganda much remains to be seen. It has been pointed out from various sides quite rightly that the views expressed in the most recent fliers of the secessionists lead, if pursued consistently, to anarchism; but that is not yet to say that the authors themselves will now also draw the same conclusions. And even if they did so, it is more than doubtful whether anarchist propaganda would for that reason find more footing among the mass of the population in Germany. Its

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success depends not only on the goodwill, the zeal, and the capability of its propagators. It also comes down to the disposition of those who are to be won over, that is, the progressive German working class. But this is decidedly unfavourable to anarchism.

The lack of success of an intellectual current, however, is no reason to ignore it or to deal with it with a few general slogans. It may be wrong in the form in which it appears, and still contain a correct idea—it can be a reaction, which has lapsed into the opposite extreme, but is justified all the same, against certain exaggerations of a current that predominates in certain larger circles. And even if it were fundamentally wrong, and rested only on empty phrases—nothing is more dangerous than answering phrases with phrases. Almost always, a false phrase is confronted by no less false a phrase to counter it. Hence, as calm and proper as possible an exposition and critique of the fundamental ideas of anarchism seems not to be untimely.

I. An Anarchist "Picture of Civilisation"

In our time of enormously increased production of printed matter, even the literature of so comparatively young a movement, with followers so few in number, as that of anarchism, already presents a veritable wealth of awkward dilemmas. First, anarchists have periodically provoked extensive talk about themselves, and thereby given the daily writers occasion to preoccupy themselves with them, and secondly within their own ranks the authorial element is represented in relative abundance. If, as a result of this, there is by no means any shortage of writings by anarchists about anarchism, then by contrast the nature of the matter prevents us from treating any of these as an authentic depiction of the aspirations of anarchism in general. It is almost always only a matter of depicting the perspectives of a particular tendency among the anarchists, which often has not much more in common with other tendencies that give themselves the same name than opposition towards the state—the only practical demand on which all anarchist theories are united. Anarchism, at least in its contemporary form, has not yet brought out any work that has distinguished itself so much from the mass of ephemeral publications that it would be regarded by friend and foe alike as a classic, in the way that Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and Ricardo's *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* count as classics for liberal bourgeois economics.

However, a short while ago, a work appeared from the pen of an anarchist which in any event claims to be more than a mere piece of agitatory writing in favour of anarchism, which wants to be more than an *exposé* of individual anarchist opinions, and to which also a greater literary significance has already been ascribed by various reviewers. It is the book by Herr John Henry Mackay: *The Anarchists: A Picture of Civilisation at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*.[2] Set the task of reporting on this work for the readers of the *Neue Zeit*, I believe that I can combine this report with the critique I already announced some time ago of the social doctrine of anarchism in general. After all, the title and the foreword of Mackay's book promise to give us an overall picture of the anarchist movement of our time.

Herr Mackay's work presents itself to the reader in the garb of belletristic fiction. It is no doctrinaire tract, illustrated with images that the author serves up, but a series of tableaux, interspersed with arguments about the doctrine. Not an actual novel, but a sketch tailored in a novelistic way. By means of a young author, Carrard Auban, the son of a Frenchman and an Alsatian woman, in whose mouth the author puts his own ideas, he lets the reader take part in discussions and reflections about the social state of affairs and revolutionary theories of society, leads them through the worst areas of London, the lodgings of the poor and the lower criminals, into anarchist clubs and into a revolutionary protest meeting, describes the demonstrations by the unemployed of 1887, and the ensuing battles between police and workers in Trafalgar Square, and recounts the Chicago bombing affair as well as the anarchist trial associated with it and its tragic conclusion. All of this in a skilful, lovely, and often gripping portrayal, which especially in the opening chapters reminds one strongly of Zola. Herr Mackay also has in common with Zola a great love for the macabre and for crass effect. We see only silhouettes of the workers' lives, the deepest misery and oppressive squalor everywhere. Insofar, the author could certainly have chosen no more suitable terrain than London, and on top of this, London under the commercial stagnation of 1887. But as admirably suited as this setting is to visualising the hideous outgrowths of the bourgeois-capitalist economic order, and as rewarding a backdrop it hence also provides for anyone seeking to portray this misery and this criminality, it still all the same only offers *one* picture, and not *the* picture of the living conditions of the English proletariat. Without an illustration of the misery in the East End, in Seven Dials, in the alleys of South London that lie next to the Thames, the picture of proletarian life in England would be

incomplete, a whitewashed caricature. But anybody who only sees this misery, and wants to outline the workers' question using it alone, also only manages to paint a distorted picture. And a theory of society that rests on the tension between life in the filthy dens of Seven Dials and the hustle and bustle in the fine restaurants on the Strand, on the contrast between the East End and the City, can likewise only be a distorted picture. In the City, the wealth "of four worlds" flows together, in the East End congregate outcasts from every corner of the Earth. In Seven Dials lives the scum, on the Strand bustles the frothy head of London's population. Froth and scum, millionaires and paupers are the opposite poles of society, but not the elements that make up its body. The novelist may be allowed to single out only one side of societal life for reproach, but anyone who wants to justify a social theory must consider all sides of it.

All of this is not to say that Mackay's theory or the theory that Mackay expresses only recognises this one side of the social picture, but with him we only get to see this one side of it.

Besides Auban as *staffage*, and accompanying him almost until the end, is the worker Otto Trupp. A dutiful, self-sacrificing soul, intelligent, but still somewhat weak in his logic. While the other represents a consistent individualistic anarchism, this one swears allegiance to fire-and-water anarchism, that is, communist anarchism of the autonomist tendency. Auban is the realist, Trupp the idealist of anarchism. Sancho Panza and Don Quixote in the reverse class position. While Sancho Panza–Auban wins for himself a comfortable existence and, as soon as he notices that they cannot complete any great works without him, puts the screws on his superiors using every trick in the book—how many intellectual workers get into such a situation today?—Don Quixote–Trupp lives in starvation, even though he is likewise very diligent in his trade, with the outcasts of the East End. In other points, the contrast looks as follows: Since he is a poor logician, Don Quixote–Trupp gives an unmasked informer a proper belting so that he almost goes deaf and blind, but Sancho Panza–Auban, when there is talk of such an informer, finds it appropriate to make the very profound remark: "Perhaps he was only unfortunate." All the same, Auban is decidedly opposed to all tactics that give informers the opportunity to practise their craft. What he wants to put in their place we shall see later.

Several degrees below Trupp in intelligence and logic lies an anarcho-communist of the "*Freiheit*" tendency.

Social Democracy is not represented by any personality that intervenes in the principled discussions.

In the aforementioned protest meeting, several of the better-known representatives of anarchism and socialism in London are described, who are easily recognisable to everyone who has ever attended such London meetings. Likewise at the end a formerly widely-fêted and feared anarchist, who now, accused of betraying a comrade, is a broken man. Some of Auban's visitors, while for a time he hosts free discussions on Sunday afternoons in his home, represent the various shades of the three fundamental anarchist types.

Yet the primary debate plays out between Auban and Trupp, and again and again intensifies around the opposition between "individualist" and "communist" anarchism, until finally the erstwhile friends take their leave of each other, realising that their convictions are leading them down entirely different paths. Trupp submerges into the mass, and Auban remains alone—lonely, but certain of the victory of his idea. When at last socialism, the "last general stupidity of mankind" is overcome, then the time of salvation will have come. Egoism will bring humans full freedom and only thereby the Realm of Fortune. And, with a "calm, magnanimous, confident smile, […] the smile of invincibility, […] on his thin, hard features", Auban goes on with his work.[3]

Seen from an artistic side, *The Anarchists* also reveals Herr Mackay as the same eloquent author that he shows himself to be in his earlier writings. Herr Mackay knows how to write a gripping account, and to recover several new sides to things that have been presented often. On the other hand, his style, although mostly fluid and punchy, is really quite mannered. An irresistible predilection for long words makes itself notable in a bothersome way, and no less annoying is his urge to emphasise incoherent sentences in a sententious way. Herr Mackay is a dab hand at effects, but he plays to the gallery far too much to ultimately achieve any effect that is worth the effort. Just as certain actors and speakers show the gallery when it is supposed to clap by leaving artificial pauses, so too his book features countless artificial pauses that belabour the reader in a similar way. But all the effects achieved in this way do not make up for the honest success of attaining "understanding and open meaning", even if these are delivered with little skill.

Yet the cheap showmanship of our painter of civilisation is not restricted to mere stylistic arts. Rhetorical exaggerations of all kinds must serve to bring about the desired effects. About the treatment of the question of the

unemployed by the London daily newspapers, it reads: "[B]ut all agreed that it was a disgrace for our 'orderly commonwealth' that this degraded rabble should undertake to parade its misery in public."[4] That is simply not true. Even the actual bourgeois newspapers did not adopt so narrow-minded a point of view. Herr Mackay seems to have limited his cultural studies in this respect to papers such as the *St. James's Gazette*. Another time it says of the unemployed: "[A]nd they, they were described as a disgrace of their age, they who were only the victims of the disgrace of their age."[5] Again, nobody in England expressed themselves as narrow-mindedly as is suggested here.—Auban, we are told, was only sentenced to a one-and-a-half-year prison term for resisting a policeman, and after he held an anarchist revolutionary propaganda speech before the court instead of defending himself. "To-day", it continues, "the courts of the civilized countries of Europe, when they hear such language, know that it is an 'enemy of order' who is before them, and do not again let him go".[6] Now, as far as we have already taken things in class justice, they have fortunately still not yet got to this point. One might allow a club speaker to use such hyperboles, although even on the rostrum only impotence seeks refuge in them, but the author who wants to depict civilisation only makes themselves ridiculous through them. On page 295, Auban recounts:

> But I should not hesitate a moment to send a bullet through the head of the burglar who should enter my house with the intention of robbing and murdering me. And I believe that he would think twice before entering on the burglary if he were certain of such a reception, instead of knowing, as at present, that stupid laws make it difficult for me to protect my life and my property, and that at the worst he will receive but such and such punishment.[7]

Although Auban knows admirably how to bluster about the laws, his knowledge of them is concerningly weak. To only pick out one case, the German Reich Penal Code says: "It is not a punishable action if the action was demanded by self-defence", and defines self-defence as follows: "Self-defence is defence that is required to ward off a present, illegal attack from oneself or another". And even "exceeding self-defence is not punishable if the perpetrator went beyond the limits of defence out of distress, fear, or terror".[8] The ideal state of affairs that our hero yearns for is offered to him even in the Prussian-German Reich.

Several passages read as though they were written thirty or forty years ago, and not in England today, with its ever more strongly-developing

workers' movement, with its legislation that is coming ever more under the influence of the enfranchised workers. Auban watches in the surroundings of Leicester Square a brawl between a greying matchseller and a prostitute "amid the wild applause of the spectators".

> This scene, one among countless, what was it other than a new proof that the method of keeping the people in brutality, in order to talk about the 'mob' and its degeneracy, was still very successful?[9]

This "method", as much as it conformed to the ideal of individualist anarchism, "everyone for themselves", has been given up in the meantime even by the Tories as antiquated.

> Music halls and boxing-matches, these occupy the few free hours of the poorer classes of England; on Sundays prayers and sermons: excellent means against 'the most dangerous evil of the time', the awakening of the people to intellectual independence.[10]

One should think that apart from the few revolutionary clubs, in England there was otherwise only a totally degenerate, physically and morally *lumpen* proletariat. Not only the workers' economic situation, but also their intellectual complexion here appears in the bleakest light.

Here, his pessimism becomes downright insufferable. The most conceited aristocrat cannot speak more dismissively of the mass than Auban and an English doctor with whom he is acquainted, Dr. Hurt. When a Swedish socialist expresses the hope that, if in future there will also truly be fewer geniuses, but that instead capacities are more widely distributed, and on average will be higher than today, Auban adds "to himself": "And a thousand donkeys will be wiser than ten wise men. Why? Because they are a thousand!"[11] But why must the thousand necessarily be donkeys, wise Herr Auban? Indeed, to this question we also receive in the book no other answer than "because they are a thousand." With obnoxious self-importance, during the fighting in Trafalgar Square, the mass is described without distinction as a pile of senseless idiots, who one moment whoop jubilantly at the military, and the next, following Auban's example, whistle and boo at them. When Auban sees wounded policemen and citizens, or rather workers, having their wounds tended by the same warders in Charing Cross Hospital, the following profound observation escapes him:

> First they crack each other's skulls, then they let the same hand mend them,—an innocent pastime. *Pack schlägt sich, Pack verträgt sich* [Cads' fighting when ended is soon mended].[12]

That such punch-ups among the "*Pack*" often proved themselves very useful for the political freedom of the English people does not concern him in his lofty grandeur. Dr. Hurt, the consistent materialist, assures us that

> the time is not distant when it will be impossible for any proud, free, and independent spirit to still call himself a Socialist, since he would be classed with those wretched toadies and worshippers of success, who even now lie on their knees before every workingman and lick his dirty hands simply because he is a workingman![13]

And so as not to be confused with those "wretched toadies", Dr. Hurt will from now on only gaze at his "proud, free, and independent" navel. But Auban, no less enamoured of his navel, already thinks of the time when "must be fought that other tyrant, more blind: 'the sovereign people'". That would be

> the age of dulness, the age of mediocrity, of dead-level-ism in the strait-jacket of equality, the age of mutual control, of petty quarrels in the place of the great struggles, of perpetual annoyances…

Then

> the fourth estate would have become the third, the class of the workingmen "promoted" to the class of the bourgeois, and the former would then exhibit the characteristics of the latter; commonplaceness of thought, pharisaical complacency of infallibility, well-fed virtue!

And then

> would again appear the genuine insurgents, great and strong, hosts of them, the champions of the ego threatened in every movement…[14]

They are rather old acquaintances that the most keen-minded of all anarchists presents to us here, rather—if it is permitted—*commonplace* ideas. Hundreds of times we have heard them droned out by reactionaries of all kinds, and most recently by the great, insuperable advocate of nothing-but-free-trade liberalism, Herr Eugen Richter. They are the old

sayings with which the most ignorant of all common-or-garden writers think they can kill off socialism without having to go to the effort of studying it. They are the same idioms with which the advocates of privilege have since forever put themselves in the way of every great societal reform. So the defenders of the *ancien régime* in the last century looked only with dread to the time where the "*roturier*" could come to power, because this would mean the death of the fine ideas with which the aristocracy whiled away its boredom. But is our time poorer in ideas *because* the privileges of birth have fallen, because "dead-level-ism in the strait-jacket of equality", at least in a political respect, is becoming more and more a fact, because education is ceasing to be a monopoly of the property-owners? No reasonable person will wish to claim this. What paralyses the full unfolding of ideas today is the economic pressure that makes *acquisition of earnings* [*Erwerb*] the first commandment of self-preservation, but in no way political "dead-level-ism" or the generalisation of education. Or does the "commonplaceness" of ideas consist precisely in the fact that they are grasped today by a wider circle of people, that they have become more common property? To bemoan this means to yearn for the times where a person already counted as half a scholar simply by having the same knowledge that today every half-decent elementary school provides; it means wishing to maintain the blindness of the mass so that the one-eyed can continue to be king or bask in the edifying consciousness that they are "the great and strong". Behind all the chatter about the necessarily imminent death of ideas, as soon as the spectre of need no longer works as a whip for the masses—that is, as soon as differences in class have fallen, and where the struggle for existence between one human being and another has ceased—there lies, where it is not the outcome of a one-sided ideology, fundamentally nothing but a great, vast helping of arrogance. But even this arrogance is perhaps still modesty compared to the intellectual foppishness that, draped in the garb of a revolutionary, has only the cool smile of superiority for the revolutionary movement of the present, because it is not waged under the banner of the pronoun for the first person singular: *ego*!

I said the cool smile, but I should have called it "the great". After all, everything that goes on with these ego-revolutionaries is great. The foreword to Mackay's book already makes that clear to us. One almost cringes before the greatness that proclaims itself there. We are dealing with nothing but titans here. Proudhon begins the list, we hear of the "titanic labour of his life". Then comes Max Stirner, the author of the "immortal" work: *The Ego and Its Own*. A new titan is Herr Benj. R. Tucker of Boston, who for seven years has fought for anarchy in the New World with the

"invincible" weapon of his *Liberty*, whose "gleaming light begins to lighten the darkness".[15] And finally, "in these days of the growing reaction, which will culminate in the victory of State Socialism", the demand has become irrefutable for Herr Mackay "here also" to be "the first champion of the Anarchistic idea". Certainly, "the majority … will tear into tatters this work, too, without having understood it." But "me their blows will not strike".[16] And how could they!

Not for nothing does the foreword seem to hail from Rome.

But since in no domain of social life today "does there exist to-day a more lamentable confusion, a more naïve superficiality, a more portentous ignorance than in that of Anarchism", then we will nonetheless attempt the balancing-act of analysing the theoretical content of this infallible work, in which the *Dresdner Volkswohl*—as the bookseller's note informs us—has discovered "many splendid arguments" that "are useful as good weapons against Social Democracy", and which has enthused our friend Tucker in Boston to exclaim:

> What he (the author) has created is a precious gem,
> In it flash rays of light for eternity.[17]

II. Max Stirner and *The Ego*

> The nineteenth century has given birth to the idea of Anarchy. In its fourth decade the boundary line between the old world of slavery and the new world of liberty was drawn. For it was in this decade that P. J. Proudhon began the titanic labour of his life with *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* (1840), and that Max Stirner wrote his immortal work: *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (1845).[18]

So Herr Mackay in the foreword. Here he follows Herr Georg Adler, who in the *Concise Dictionary of the Political Sciences* describes Proudhon on the one hand, and Stirner as well as some radical German Young Hegelians on the other hand as the first theorists of anarchism. But even if this is only conditionally correct, it is flatly wrong to present the "idea of anarchy" as a product of the nineteenth century. The idea of anarchy as a societal state of affairs without any coercion from human sources, without rulers and without binding external obligations, can be traced back right up to the earliest beginnings of the literature of civilised peoples. In Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times, it has been depicted as a societal ideal in one form or another by poets and philosophers, by

religious fanatics and learned politicians. It is as old as the idea of communism in general. Almost all authors of communist theories of society had in mind as their final goal a free society, innocent of all coercion. Where coercion is permitted or endorsed, this applies usually only to the epoch of transition, as a means of education and preparation.

But even if one ignores these communist ideal societies on account of their utopian character, it is still wrong to lead back the idea of anarchy to Proudhon or Stirner. The so very voluminous philosophy of state literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which follows on from Hobbes' work *De Cive*, polemically and deductively, is full of treatises that portray the coercion exercised by the state or in the state's name as an evil, and by contrast a societal state where everyone acts according to their own discretion as the sole "natural" one, and hence worth striving for. And even this philosophy of state or of society [*Staats- oder Gesellschaftsphilosophie*] was nothing new, it was for the most part only repeating comments by Greek and Roman authors from certain epochs of the two civilised countries of Antiquity.

What is unique to the nineteenth century are only the specific applications of the idea—the form that it assumes in Stirner, Proudhon, and others.

Undeniably, of all the anarchists, Stirner, to preoccupy ourselves next with this original author, is the most consistent. Without accepting the name of anarchist, he developed his object, the idea of the absence of rulership [*Herrschaftslosigkeit*], up to its last conclusions. He rejects not only the state, but also society, humanity, any idea that is supposed to bind the individual; for in the moment where the human being places any object or idea whatsoever, e.g., freedom, truth, above themselves, above their own personality, they are dependent, they are not their "own". Not freedom, but rather *ownness* is to be aspired to.

> Ownness, on the contrary, is my whole being and existence, it is I myself. I am free from what I am *rid* of, owner of what I have in my *power* or what I *control*.[19]

Wherever he speaks of it, Stirner mocks absolute freedom, which anarchists today make so much of, for him it is "an ideal, a phantasm". He exclaims:

> What have you then when you have freedom—[...] complete freedom? Then you are rid of everything that embarrasses you, everything, and there is probably nothing that does not once in your life embarrass you and cause you

> inconvenience. And for whose sake, then, did you want to be rid of it? Doubtless *for your* sake, because it is in *your* way! But, if something were not inconvenient to you; if, on the contrary, it were quite to your mind (such as the gently but *irresistibly commanding* look of your loved one)—then you would not want to be rid of it and free from it. Why not? For *your sake* again!…
>
> Why will you not take courage now to make *yourselves* really the central point and the main thing altogether? Why grasp in the air at freedom, your dream? Are you your dream?[20]

And at another point:

> If your efforts are ever to make 'freedom' the issue, then exhaust freedom's demands. Who is it that is to become free? You, I, we. Free from what? From everything that is not you, not I, not we. I, therefore, am the kernel that is to be delivered from all wrappings and—freed from all cramping shells. What is left when I have been freed from everything that is not I? Only I, and nothing but I. But freedom has nothing to offer to this I himself.…
>
> Now why, if freedom is striven after for love of the I after all, why not choose the I himself as beginning, middle, and end? Am I not worth more than freedom? Is it not I that make myself free, am not I the first?…
>
> Think that over well, and decide whether you will place on your banner the dream of 'freedom' or the resolution of 'egoism', of 'ownness'.…
>
> 'Freedom' is and remains a *longing*, a romantic plaint, a Christian hope for unearthliness and futurity; 'ownness' is a reality, which *of itself* removes just so much unfreedom as by barring your own way hinders you. What does not disturb you, you will not want to renounce; and, if it begins to disturb you, why, you know that 'you must obey *yourselves* rather than men'!…
>
> The own man is the free-born, the man free to begin with; the free man, on the contrary, is only the eleutheromaniac, the dreamer and enthusiast.[21]

All that is thought out very logically, and no less so is the further exploration of what this "own" or "own man" now looks like, that it is not Feuerbach's objective or abstract "human", but rather the subjective human, the individual personality, which embodies itself in the ego—be it noted, not in Fichte's absolute, but in the ephemeral, finite ego. *The* human being, i.e., the human in the objective sense, as a description for the human genus, is according to Stirner only another highest being, "the last evil *spirit* or spook, the most deceptive or most intimate, the craftiest liar with honest mien, the father of lies", and the cult of humanity preached by the atheists is "merely an altered form of the fear of god".

> Whether … anything is held sacred for God's sake or for man's (humanity's)—this does not change the fear of God, since man is revered as 'supreme essence', as much as on the specifically religious standpoint God as 'supreme essence' calls for our fear [*Furcht*] and reverence [*Ehrfurcht*]; both overawe us.[22]

It is not saying too much of Stirner's book, neither in a good nor a bad sense, if one describes it as the Song of Songs of egoism. Not only the state, society—everything is negated that opposes the representatives of the ego, the own man. Stirner derides the liberals, the radicals, the communists, he ridicules Proudhon, and he would also have mocked today's anarchists if he had been familiar with their writings. When Proudhon declares in the *Creation of Order in Humanity*: "In industry as well as science, the publication of a discovery is the first and most sacred of duties", then Stirner has for that only the cool remark: "the beautiful dream of a 'social duty' still continues to be dreamed".[23] But society is not an ego at all, that can give, lend, or guarantee, but rather "an instrument or means from which we may derive benefit", since "we have no societal duties, but solely interests for the pursuance of which society must serve us". Another time it says:

> Proudhon (Weitling too) thinks he is telling the worst about property when he calls it theft (*vol*). Passing quite over the embarrassing question, what well-founded objection could be made against theft, we only ask: Is the concept 'theft' at all possible unless one allows validity to the concept 'property'? How can one steal if property is not already extant?[24]

But according to Stirner, others' property—and of this alone Proudhon is speaking—"not less existent by renunciation, cession, and humility; it is a *present*".[25] Hence, why

> so sentimentally call for compassion as a poor victim of robbery, when one is just a foolish, cowardly giver of presents? Why here again put the fault on others as if they were robbing us, while we ourselves do bear the fault in leaving the others unrobbed? The poor are to blame for there being rich men.[26]

With respect to Proudhon's distinction between owners [*Eigentümer*] and possessors [*Inhaber*] or beneficiaries [*Nutznießer*], it says, *inter alia*:

> Proudhon might spare his prolix pathos if he said: 'There are some things that belong only to a few, and to which we others will from now on lay claim or—siege. Let us take them, because one comes to property by taking, and the property of which for the present we are still deprived came to the proprietors likewise only by taking. It can be utilised better if it is in the hands of *us all* than if the few control it. Let us therefore associate ourselves for the purpose of this robbery (*vol*).'—Instead of this, he tries to get us to believe that society is the original possessor and the sole proprietor, of imprescriptible right; against it the so-called proprietors have become thieves (*La propriété c'est le vol*); if it now deprives of his property the present proprietor, it robs him of nothing, as it is only availing itself of its imprescriptible right.—So far one comes with the spook of society as a *moral person*. On the contrary, what man can obtain belongs to him: the world belongs to *me*. Do you say anything else by your opposite proposition? 'The world belongs to *all*?' All are I and again I, etc. But you make out of the 'all' a spook, and make it sacred, so that then the 'all' become the individual's fearful *master*. Then the ghost of 'right' places itself on their side.[27]

Every collectivity that stands above the individual is rejected. Individuals may well unite, form a club or an association, but nothing binds the individual to these other than their *interest*. As soon as this is no longer calculated in this association, the own one leaves it, "[f]or him the party remains all the time nothing but a gathering: he is one of the party, he takes *part*".[28] But here too, Stirner is more logical than the anarchist of our times. When he says that it is ludicrous that one "spot" defection with "the stain of faithlessness", then he finds it no less laughable to curse at political or other cooperatives, parties, clubs, etc., if they exclude members who contravene their interests. The anarchists believe that they are saying who knows what when they compare such expulsions with the excommunications of the Catholic Church. Stirner describes the complaints of the Protestants against the excommunications of heretics as a "subterfuge"—albeit one that they believe themselves—"to roll the fault off oneself".[29]

He writes:

> That a society (such as the society of the state) diminishes my *liberty* offends me little. Why, I have to let my liberty be limited by all sorts of powers and by every one who is stronger; indeed, by every fellow-man; and, were I the autocrat of all the Russias, I yet should not enjoy absolute liberty. But *ownness* I will not have taken from me.…
>
> A society which I join does indeed take from me many liberties, but in return it affords me other liberties; neither does it matter if I myself deprive

> myself of this and that liberty (such as by any contract). On the other hand, I want to hold jealously to my ownness. Every community has the propensity, stronger or weaker according to the fullness of its power, to become an *authority* to its members and to set *limits* for them.[30]

But according to Stirner, there is nothing concerning about that yet as such.

> Limitation of liberty is inevitable everywhere, for one cannot get rid of everything; … As religion, and most decidedly Christianity, tormented man with the demand to realise the unnatural and self-contradictory, so it is to be looked upon only as the true logical outcome of that religious overstraining and overwroughtness that finally liberty, itself, absolute liberty, was exalted into an ideal, and thus the nonsense of the impossible comes glaringly to light.[31]

Absolute freedom "religious overstraining" and "the nonsense of the impossible"—the slogans of anarchism today come off almost worse with Stirner than the slogans of the liberals, radicals, and communists of his time. The most consistent anarchist is at the same time the most unrelenting critic of anarchist rhetoric.

So, for example, he also mocks those who believe that they are performing some great feat if they fundamentally go to war against all considerations. He says:

> Wild young men, bumptious students, who set aside all considerations, are *really* philistines, since with them, as with the latter, considerations form the substance of their conduct; only that as swaggerers they are mutinous against considerations and in negative relations to them, but as philistines, later, they give themselves up to considerations and have positive relations to them.[32]

We can observe the accuracy of this statement every day even today.

The "own man" in Stirner's sense recognises nothing above themselves, neither an idea nor an object. "Nothing is more to me than myself."[33] (Introduction.) They are "unique" to themselves. Nothing but interest, which however can change at any moment, binds them to their fellow human beings, today to these, tomorrow to those. There is no duty that is imposed on them through their existence vis-à-vis their surroundings. They also have no duties towards themselves, apart from those they

impose on themselves. How they are, so should they be, and what they can become so they shall be, however much more one may tell them of their human, etc., "callings". "I do not develop men, nor as man, but, as I, I develop—myself."[34]

The critique of this theory, which is undertaken with great sagacity, is given in the passage with which Stirner closes his work:

> I am *owner* of my might, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique one* the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I concern myself for myself, the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say:
>
> All things are nothing to me.[35]

That is right, for cause and owner are up in the air. This own one, who "in the unique one" returns to their "creative nothing", is a mere abstraction, as much as or even more so than Feuerbach's "human", about which Stirner gives his often very accurate glosses. If that is the mere abstraction of "genus", then is his "unique one" the abstraction of a species, but torn out of all the conditions in which this species exists. Where in all the world do we have such a "unique one"—except in the asylum? Only in their imagination can the human being in the nineteenth century be "unique", in reality they are no more absolutely unique than they are or can be absolutely free. The striving for "uniqueness" is likewise only "religious overstraining and overwroughtness", the "unique ego" is no more rational than "absolute freedom", "absolute equality", the absolute human, or any absolute idea whatsoever, it too is "a dream, a phantasm".

Stirner believes he is standing on the most secure, realistic foundation when he starts out from no philosophical ego, but from his own personal one. But by leaving entirely undiscussed the conditions under which this ego lives and has emerged, its history and the circumstances of its existence, he distances himself necessarily again and again from reality, and ruminates rather than examining. The world that exists outside his head is only presented by way of an example. But that also happens with the philosophical idealists whom he attacks, he only distinguishes himself from them by gradation, not in principle, he does not rid himself of the metaphysical way of thinking, and so his entire enquiry remains, as Friedrich Engels calls it, a curio—it ends in a *cul-de-sac*. It is again and again the Hegelian absolute "idea", only that here it calls itself "ego, the unique

one". This unique one too stands on its head—Max Stirner's head. It is, as we have said, "a phantasm".

Sofar as Stirner's egoist holds water, it is only the cheap ideological imitation of the member of bourgeois society, resting on competition. They are after all also an "own man", who has to assert their "own" if they want to amount to anything in it. But woe to them if this own only consist in its metaphysical "ownness", they can thereby starve miserably, just as things went only too literally for the poor schoolteacher Kaspar Schmidt, *alias* Max Stirner. Bourgeois society points everyone towards their "ego", to their "natural egoism". It says to them: My good friend, see how you make it through. Fight, defend yourself, try to expand yourself out—the more you do so, the more you serve *yourself*, the better. Although I ask that in doing so you observe certain rules, but even that is not meant so seriously. You must only not let yourself be indited. I cannot guarantee you any absolute freedom, but you can unfold your "ownness" in every direction, you can be as much of an egoist as you like.

Egoism, far from being a vice, is in bourgeois society the highest virtue. With greater or lesser provisos, depending on their standpoint, all philosophers of the bourgeoisie have expressed this; one should only remember Bentham and his school in England, the materialists of the previous century in France, and their precursors in other countries.

Stirner only takes this idea to its most intense extremes; if the term were not so often misapplied, one could say that he "Hegelises it". But as much as he takes pains to drive the idea of the "unique one" to its zenith, he must still, exactly like his precursors, at every moment take refuge in mere excuses in order not to lose himself in pure absurdities. What with them, e.g., is "enlightened egoism", is for him "self-serving love", or rather partisan concern [*Teilnahme*].

> Am I perchance to have no lively interest in the person of another, are *his* joy and *his* weal not to lie at my heart, is the enjoyment that I furnish him not to be more to me than other enjoyments of my own? On the contrary, I can with joy sacrifice to him numberless enjoyments, I can deny myself numberless things for the enhancement of *his* pleasure, and I can risk for him what without him was the dearest to me, my life, my welfare, my freedom. Why, it constitutes my pleasure and my happiness to refresh myself with his happiness and his pleasure. But *myself*, *my own self*, I do not sacrifice to him, but remain an egoist and—enjoy him. …
>
> I love men too, not merely individuals, but every one. But I love them with the consciousness of egoism; I love them because love makes *me* happy, I love because loving is natural to me, because it pleases me.[36]

That seems entirely logical, but it is still only rabulistic sophistry. A different meaning is inveigled into the concept of egoism or self-interest [*Eigennutz*], completely different things are lumped together within it, and it is thereby voided of any definite meaning. None of our sentiments, be they love, concern, or hatred, hang in the air, or are purely objective in nature; all of them are expressions of the subject, of the ego. But they are not yet for that reason already egoism, nor do they become this merely because we become conscious of their subjective character. Just like the love of the child, or of humans in nature often expresses itself in an egoistic fashion, without therefore being egoistic—for to egoism belongs the consciousness of an exclusive consideration of the ego—so too is the love of the reflecting person only egoistic once their consciousness of its subjectivity is joined by the deliberate—and as the case may be also the careless—betrayal of the well-being of the other person. If possible, it is even more wrong to call egoism the sacrifice of one's own personality for the sake of a loved one or thing, as soon as it becomes reasonable, i.e., not caused by folly. Then all distinction ceases, and the end-point is the crassest commonplace.

Stirner's apparent realism is in reality the highest ideology, the idealisation of the bourgeois competitive struggle. This too substitutes a society comprised wholly of individuals. But already in bourgeois practice, the matter turns out differently in many ways. Instead of realising their ideal more and more with every forward step, at a certain point the bourgeois class starts to backslide. Their means of economic power grow over their heads, they take on an ever more societal form, and individuals are no longer capable of mastering them. Here the state, there the community are now called on afresh to intervene and help, associations form anew with their own laws, in which individuals give up their economic "ownness" wholly or in part. "Out of self-interest", Stirner would interject here. But self-interest only plays a secondary role except where it is a matter of mere alliances of robbers. *Necessity* plays first fiddle here. The drowning person does not reach for the wooden plank that keeps them afloat for a while out of self-interest, but out of a drive for self-preservation, which again is not the same as egoism. Incidentally, here it does not even come down so much to *motives*. The main point is that bourgeois practice does not amount to the realisation of the "unique individual".

There remains proletarian practice. According to Stirner, it is egoism that will deliver the workers from their servitude, and in his vein "become egoists!" is Auban's cry in Mackay. But already by the example that Stirner

offers can one recognise the flaws in his theory, as soon as one examines it more closely in a practical light. For when Stirner has "the farmhands" announce to their former masters that from now on they would no longer hire themselves out "below price"—we will ignore his extremely unclear way of expressing himself economically—then already he presupposes the singleness of mind of *all* farmhands, not the egoism of the "unique individual", but that of a multitude, a *class*. But this looks completely different than the former. Before getting to the stage where farmhands as a class behave with unified demands and are strong enough to push them through, they must in their outsized majority have ceased to feel that they are "individuals [*Einzelne*]" let alone "unique individuals [*Einzige*]", or "the solitary ego [*das alleinige Ich*]". It requires longer struggles, struggles with temporary setbacks and partial victories, and struggling means making sacrifices. *Class* interest does not at every moment coincide with *personal* interest, the interest of the *individual*. In such a conflict, what does the theory of egoism decide? Shall "I" give up "my" warm spot because of a strike, which could possibly be lost? The "unique individual", for whom "nothing is more to me than myself", who declares that it is "obsession" to place any idea or object higher than their own-ness, can, as soon as the fortunes of the strikers are in doubt, do nothing other than to stay in the dry. Egoism commands it. The knight of uniqueness or own-ness or whatever else one may like to call the thing presents himself at the given moment—as the political or economic blackleg.

And for this purpose, Stirner gives them for the road the lovely doctrine that his pettifoggery and sophistry is "the first step in freedom", nothing "but a way of utilising something established without doing away with it".[37] The "unique individual" is no revolutionary, but an "outrage", but an outrage like Christ, who rendered unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. That may from time to time be very practical, but it is not the be-all and end-all. The history of Christianity permits a different conclusion. However, in Stirner history precisely only counts so far as it reinforces his idea, and not only the past but also the present and future. For the actual struggles of his epoch, for the imminently to-be-realised demands of the societal classes that are driving forwards, Stirner only has supercilious critique. Freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc., are not enough for the "unique individual", and they also do not even need them to affirm their "ownness". If they find it necessary, they seek to betray the state, found secret printer's, etc. If others do the same as them, then one day it will collapse by itself.

Thus his seemingly highly intellectual audacity—for Stirner does not shy away from anything, lying, hypocrisy, and betrayal according to him look worse than they really are, and he does not recognise any vices—culminates in a theory of complete impotence. In the comfort of one's study, one can found "secret printer's" on egoism, but in the real world several other properties are also needed for this as well. The nihilism that Stirner's theory amounts to has a different face than the idea that carries this name in Russia. His cause he has "built on nothing". But nothing comes from nothing. According to him, there are no more steps forward to be taken. All his parroters and followers could only achieve anything by faking Stirner, by pawning him, so that they regressed a whole way behind him. What Bakunin offered, and what Mackay offers, are only bastardisations of Stirner's ideas. Nothing cannot conceive any children—the "unique individual" remains unique.

III. Proudhon and Mutualism

In his radicalism, Stirner was no friend of sonorous slogans. He wanted to impress with the acuity of his analysis, with the audacity of his conclusions, but he was not particularly fussed about marshalling statements that merely through their paradoxical echoes were meant to cause a sensation among the wider public. In this respect, his book rather distinguishes itself more through a stately indifference. Not so Proudhon. His writings are lousy with paradoxes, he lapses into declamation at every opportunity, he constantly tries to formulate statements that express things that have never yet existed in a baffling form, and, since after all it is mostly only the *form* in which what has not yet existed lies, he finds himself compelled to make constant revisions. It is usually the misfortune of authors who have their own ideas to be misunderstood—and I want from the outset to forestall the view that I wish to dispute this quality in Proudhon—but with Proudhon, misunderstanding is downright obligatory. Whichever one of his writings one takes in one's hand, one will never be able to say with certainty about any sentence it contains that it is the expression of Proudhon's view about the object it deals with. Rather, the more apodictic the statement, the more certain one can be of finding it either modified or even reversed into its opposite in a subsequent work. And this not even as a result of any change in Proudhon's fundamental views that happened in the time between the two publications, but rather simply because in the meantime it suited Proudhon to look at the matter from another

perspective. It was, I believe, Karl Grün who once wrote that Proudhon has a bit of a squint. But if that was true about the man, it applies still far more to Proudhon the author. His eyes were constantly pointing in different directions, when he wrote he never looked straight ahead with both of them, but rather always at most with one, while the other glanced now here, now there. In this way, with Proudhon more than with any other author, one is reliant on interpretation and integration.

So Proudhon's German evangelist, Herr Dr. A. Mühlberger, writes:

> A true depiction of Proudhon's theory of property thus has as its precondition a precise analysis not only of several specific writings on property, but likewise also his occasional elaborations about it in other works. These analyses should then be put in relation to one another, the main points of their argument picked out and compared, and ultimately all of it examined as to its conceptual value. Only then can the question be answered of whether Proudhon's theory of property is a *smörgåsbord* of more-or-less ingenious, often mutually contradictory *aperçus* … or not rather—a unified edifice of ideas, as grandiose as it is logical, and of strict consistency.[38]

What does that mean? That if we want to learn what Proudhon's standpoint with respect to property is, we cannot, as we would with other authors, cleave to a work from the man's mature period that deals with the object, but instead must heave our way through the whole mountain of Proudhon's publications, and practise exegeses, homiletics, and God knows what other theological arts on them.

Just as with Proudhon's theory of property, according to Mühlberger, the same can also be said regarding his theory of the general franchise and, we must assume, also all other questions of politics and economics with which Proudhon occupied himself. For there is no shortage of contradictory statements anywhere; everywhere one has to discover this "unified logical edifice of ideas" within and from statements that fly directly into each other's faces.

Fortunately, the task is in reality not quite as hard as it seems from Mühlberger's instruction. One thing is namely truly unified in Proudhon's works, and if one wishes, even grandiosely unified, and that is the nature and the mainspring of the contradictions they contain. Once one is clear about this, one really does not need to have all the products of Proudhon's pen in hand to learn what his stance towards some individual question or other really is. It is enough, as a rule, to take the work in which Proudhon

addresses the object the most thoroughly, and one or two other writings besides. One will learn just as much from them.

Besides Stirner, Proudhon is the author to whom anarchist doctrine is commonly traced back. He was even the first to use the word anarchy to describe the societal state of affairs he strove for. Sofar as this word only signifies the absence of any oppressive, regulative state force that stands by its own right above that of society, Proudhon certainly was not thereby postulating anything new, no more than his expression "property is theft" was new. But irrespective of what significance he himself associated with them—in 1840, when Proudhon's work *What is Property?* came out, the negation of property and the state already meant something different than they had in the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is time that gives slogans their meaning, and the time of Proudhon's first appearance is the time of the first revolutionary stirrings of the modern proletariat. The influence that Proudhon later gained over the French workers' movement, and indirectly over the workers' movement in other countries, and which namely also asserted itself in the International Workingmen's Association, became the reason that the first attempt to form an anarchist party within the workers' movement followed on directly from Proudhon. Sofar it is accordingly also justified, as Herr Mackay does, to call Proudhon the "Father of Anarchy". Let us see how far this is the case.

Already in the work *What is Property?*, where Proudhon confesses himself to be an anarchist, he reduces his attack on property ultimately to fighting against specific forms of it. It is very easy to say this in retrospect, but it is nevertheless still indisputably correct that already in this book is contained in embryonic form the fundamental idea of the conclusion of Proudhon's examinations of property: "Property is freedom". It is not property *simpliciter*, but exclusive, privileged property that he repudiates, and for the rest it says:

> Possession is rightful, property is unrightful. Suppress property while preserving possession; and, even just by this modification of the principle, you will change everything in the laws, the government, the economy, the institutions: you will drive evil from the Earth.[39]

Entirely in the same vein, Brissot, who later became a conventionalist, who famously sixty years before Proudhon—in his *Recherches philosophiques sur le droit de propriété*, which appeared in 1780—called exclusive

property theft, and declared possession to be "the true, sacred property". Possession does not found any titles of right.

> If the possessor has no need and I have one, then that is my entitlement, which rescinds possession.

If need is present on both sides, then the question is "a matter of statics". That is the right of our original condition, and this right is universal and inalienable.[40] But Brissot does not only declare that exclusive—one should take note of the restriction—property is theft, he justifies theft based on need, and in this way at least those who glorify the scoundrel's tactics among the anarchists would have every reason to go back to the first author to pronounce the expression above. But Brissot does not lend himself to any further use than that, and so we can also let rest the question of whether Proudhon plagiarised him. In the most extreme case, it was only ever a matter of his having used a paradoxical expression for an idea that already runs through the entire literature of the natural-rights philosophers—that is, of a stimulating suggestion. The substance that is at stake here is not the critical stance towards traditional property *simpliciter*, but rather the particular nature of the critique and the applications that arise from it.

The treatise *What is Property?* is a mixture of moral, sociological, and economic deductions, in such a manner that Proudhon does not examine the question successively from these three angles, but mostly entirely arbitrarily draws his arguments now from the one, now from the other domain, continuously jumps from one to the other, and in the middle of an economic analysis, e.g., suddenly starts to moralise, and manipulates around the ethical concepts of freedom, equality, justice, where the thread of historical or economic analysis tears off. The core point of the latter can be found at the following point:

> Does every industrial creation have an absolute, unchangeable, hence also legitimate and true exchange value?—Yes.
>
> Can every product of man be exchanged for another product of man?—Again, yes.
>
> How many nails is a pair of shoes worth? If we could resolve this frightful problem, we would have the key to the social system that humanity has spent six thousand years searching for. Before this problem, the economist becomes confused and retreats; the peasant who does not how how to read or write answers without batting an eyelid: As much as one can make in the selfsame time with the selfsame effort.[41]

"Before this problem, the economist becomes confused and retreats." But it is well-known that "the economist" did *not* retreat before the problem already 23 years before Proudhon's work appeared, but gave the same answer to it as the one that Proudhon here places into the mouth of a farmer, and that this economist was called Ricardo. In other words, the philosopher's stone had been found long before the "farmer" P.-J. Proudhon by the bourgeois economist David Ricardo. Everything further about the history of this discovery can be read in the *Poverty of Philosophy* by Karl Marx, and in the preface that Fr. Engels wrote for it; here a particular detailed reference to it would take us too far off course. Only that already soon after the first appearance of Ricardo's main work, in the 1820s and 1830s, English socialists attempted to forge Ricardo's theory of value into a weapon against bourgeois society.

Proudhon too deploys the statement that the value of a product lies in the labour time required to manufacture it as a weapon against property. But it is almost exclusively landed property that he uses as an example, as well as usurious capital. By comparison, he consistently quickly skates over industrial capital.[42] It is rent and landed property against which he turns the entire force of his attacks. But land rent is famously also the main object of Ricardo's critique. Of which Proudhon, however, knows nothing. He writes:

> According to Ricardo, MacCulloch, and Mill, the so-called ground rent is nothing other than the *excess of the product of the most fertile piece of earth over the product of pieces of earth of inferior quality*; in such a way that the ground rent only starts to apply to the former once one is obliged by the increase in the population to resort to cultivating the latter. It is difficult to find any sense in that. How can a right over a plot of land come about as a result of different qualities of the soil? How should the varieties of *humus* give rise to a principle of legislation and of politics? Such metaphysics is so subtle for me, or so dense, that I lose myself the more I think about it.…
>
> If they had limited themselves to saying that the difference between pieces of earth was the *occasion* for ground rent, but not that it is the *cause* of it, we would have gleaned a precious lesson from this simple observation, namely that the establishment of a ground rent would have had its principle in the desire for equality.[43]

To allege that Ricardo and his school had derived a *right* to ground rent from the varied qualities of plots of land is a pretty hefty claim, which it becomes truly difficult to believe is a mere misunderstanding. However,

with Proudhon, one must in these matters now be very forbearing, and so we wish to assume that it truly escaped him that for Ricardo it was not a matter of justification, but only of economic *explanation* of ground rent, and that the tendency of Ricardo's enquiries is one that is *hostile* to ground rent. But for us, Ricardo's putative opponent unveils himself here again as his straggling latecomer.

This becomes even clearer several pages after the cited passages. Proudhon raises the question:

> But if the smith, the wagoner, in short every industrious person has the right to the product for the instruments that he delivers, and if the earth is an instrument of production, why should this instrument not grant its actual or alleged owner a share in the products, as is the case for the owners of plough- and wagon-factories?

And he answers:

> Answer: Here lies the nub of the riddle, the *arcanum* of property, which it is absolutely essential to untangle if one wishes to understand something about the strange effects of the right of the owner. The worker [Ed. B.—in French *ouvrier*, so more accurately translated as 'craftsman'] who fabricates or repairs the instruments of the agriculturalist receives the price for doing so *once*, either at the moment of delivery, or in several instalments; and once this price is paid to the worker, the tools he has delivered no longer belong to him. He never demands a double salary for the same tool, or the same repair: if he shares with the tenant-farmer every year, it is because he is doing some work for the farmer every year.…
>
> Between the land-owner and the tenant-farmer there is accordingly no exchange of values or services; thus, as we said in the axiom, tenancy is truly an escheat, an extortion founded uniquely on fraud and violence on the one hand, and on weakness and ignorance on the other. *Products*, say the economists, *cannot be bought except by products.* This aphorism is the condemnation of property. The property-owner, producing nothing by himself nor by his instruments, and receiving products in exchange for nothing, is either a parasite or a thief.[44]

In short, the kind of property to be rejected is landed property, the property income to be rejected is ground rent, alongside which also ranks interest.—Proudhon's axiom "property is theft" resolves into the statement: ground rent and interest is theft. Business-owners' profit slips through the net along with labour income.

Yet the struggle against ground rent constitutes, as one knows, a phase in the history of *industrial* capital, it is a struggle within bourgeois society, not against it. What distinguishes Proudhon from the economists who represent the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie against that of the landowning class is not the core but the form of his critique. While these anxiously guard against appearing to be principled enemies of property, Proudhon behaves as if he were putting property on trial *tout court*; while they plead naïve innocence, Proudhon cloaks himself in the garb of the bourgeois Antichrist, the raging avenging angel, who is conducting a trial to the death for bourgeois society. But the sword that he draws against it does not aim for its heart, and the "right to fair exchange" graven on its blade is the ideal of the well-meaning bourgeois.

And anarchy? Now, one needs only consult the arguments with which Proudhon follows the passage where he avows that he is an anarchist in order to become convinced that here too "the new and unprecedented" lay in the choice of words and not in the substance of the matter. Five pages after that passage it says:

> Property and royalty have been heading towards their downfall since the beginning of the world; just as mankind looks for justice in equality, society seeks order in anarchy. *Anarchy*, absence of a master, of a sovereign, that is the form of government which we are approaching every day, and which lets us see our entrenched habit of taking man as our rule and his will as the law as the greatest disorder and the expression of chaos.[45]

Then a little later:

> Incidentally I do not see the danger for citizens' freedom if instead of the pen of the legislator, the sword of the law is placed back in the hands of the citizens. Executive power belongs essentially to will, and cannot be entrusted to too many mandataries: that is the true people's sovereignty.[46]

Further in the final theses:

> 2. The law that rests on the science of facts, consequently on necessity, never infringes independence.
>
> 3. Individual *independence* or autonomy of private reason, deriving from the difference in talents and abilities, can exist without any danger within the limits of the law.[47]

And finally it says of freedom, the "synthesis of community—*communauté*—and property" found by Proudhon:

> Freedom is anarchy because it does not admit the government of will, but solely the authority of the law, that is, necessity.[48]

The line of thought everywhere here is the same as that of unailing bourgeois liberalism. Anarchy is the subjection of public institutions to the needs of "fair exchange".

This is Proudhon in his first economic treatise, in which he at least is still a proletarian, and also now and again speaks the language of the proletarian and himself does not spare business-owners' profit. But with every successive work, the force of his attacks on bourgeois institutions lets up, and his demands adjust themselves more to the needs of bourgeois society. The original misunderstanding, to consider the ideals of the bourgeoisie that believes in itself to be those of the proletariat, becomes a conscious tendency to embourgeois the proletariat. But his trajectory of development is logical. After the work *What is Property?*, Proudhon was only left with the choice of either getting rid of the bourgeois prejudices it contained, or giving up acting as an opponent of bourgeois property. The next longer work was a step in the latter direction, and from there on there was no more stopping him. The many contradictions in Proudhon's writings, insofar as they are not the products of dialectical sensationalism, can be described as the results of the contest between the proletarian and bourgeois ideas within him. Hence also his latest writings, where the bourgeois has fully prevailed against the proletarian, evince the fewest contradictions. Only very exceptionally and in very weakened wails—instead of threatening protests—can the voice of the proletarian be discerned. For example, in the *Theory of Property* that stems from Proudhon's final years, and which was only published after his death, the result of his enquiry is a glorification of property of a kind that the most inveterate bourgeois economist could not have delivered more crassly, whereupon right at the end Proudhon plaintively cries that what he said there was only the voice of his reason, but his *heart* would never be in favour of property. The high walls surrounding Paris, which robbed the poor pedestrian of the enjoyment of the sun and the view of the fields, and the inscriptions "Private Property" over open thoroughfares always awoke a feeling of embitterment within him.

> If I ever find I have become a property-owner, then I will act in such a way that God and the people, and above all the poor, will forgive me for it.[49]

All honour to Proudhon's good heart, but let us now hear the voice of his chastened reason.

The first 62 pages of the work *The Theory of Property* are not by Proudhon. Since the manuscript of it has been lost, the publishers of Proudhon's *Nachlass*, his friends J. A. Langlois, G. Duchêne, F. G. Bergmann, and F. Delhasse compiled the introduction on the basis of the views that Proudhon developed in his later years about the object elsewhere. Right at the start, they also have Proudhon say: "Only of the latter—namely landed property—have I said that it is theft."[50] Further, they cite Proudhon's statement from his *Of Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, where Proudhon breaks away from his theory, which echoes Hegel, of contradictions that resolve into a higher unity, that is, not only from his often very skewed application of Hegel's formula, but also from its revolutionary core. It reads *verbatim*:

> *The antinomy* [Ed. B.—the contradictory element in things] *is not resolved*; therein lies the fundamental flaw of all Hegelian philosophy. The two terms which it comprises *balance* one another, either between themselves, or with other antinomic terms: which leads to the result we are looking for. But equilibrium is not synthesis as Hegel understood it and how I assumed it, following him.[51]

That is certainly correct, since this theory of equilibrium, according to which everything that exists is worth never perishing, is the greatest consolation for all philistines, whereas Hegel's dialectic is their eternal frustration. Instead of the resolution of contradictions, Proudhon only seeks to "balance" them, the most conservative of all enterprises; and "seek, and ye shall find".

> It is hence proved that property … is the most fearsome enemy and the most faithless ally for governmental power; in a word, that in its relations to the state it is guided by only a single principle, a single feeling, a single idea: personal interest, egoism. This, from a political perspective is the abuse of property.[52]
>
> Property is the greatest revolutionary force that exists and that can oppose state power.… Where to find a power that would be capable of counter balancing this frightful power of the state? There is none other like

> property. To act as a counterweight to public force, to keep the state in check, and thereby securing individual freedom—that is thus the primary function of property in the political system.[53]
>
> So the absolutism of the state opposes the absolutism of property, and the two act upon one another, whereby through their reciprocal action and reaction they continuously call into being new safeguards for society, and new guarantees for the property-owner, and ensure that freedom, work, and justice finally triumph.[54]
>
> Modern property, seemingly founded against all right, all sense, and all reason on a double absolutism, can be regarded as the triumph of freedom.[55]
>
> Let the property-owner guarantee it. … No, even in the case where it suits the property-owner to leave his estates untilled, you helmsmen of the state may not interfere! Let the property-owners guarantee it.[56]
>
> Property is absolute and includes its misuse; to impose conditions on it means to destroy it.[57]
>
> Property is by its nature federal, it resists unitary governance.[58]

These samples will suffice; they show what kind of an enquiry led Proudhon, instead of starting out from the material conditions of societal life, instead of studying the economic circumstances, classes and their emergence, conditions of existence and needs, to seek to develop out of abstract concepts formulas that were generally valid and decisive for all times and conditions. It could do nothing other than end in the apotheosis of what these concepts rested on, and that was here society as it existed. Proudhon's ideal of freedom is bourgeois freedom, which has property as its foundation, his ideal of justice is bourgeois justice. He writes: "What is justice in fact if not the equilibrium between forces?" But what does the creation of an equilibrium between forces mean? Stability, the preservation of what exists. The political magic formula to realise this ideal should be federalism, the formula by means of which the working class too should find itself taken into account should be mutualism. This Proudhon had already sketched out in earlier writings, but it is developed in the most thorough detail in the second of his two *Nachlass* works: *Of the Political Capacity of the Working Class.*

The treatise *Of the Political Capacity of the Working Class* was written in 1864. Apart from the final chapter, it is wholly by Proudhon, who also had already read through the corrections to it. A preface that Proudhon had managed to write dedicates the work to a number of workers in Paris and Rouen, who had asked Proudhon about the conduct they were to observe in the elections of 1863 and 1864, and to whom he had recommended in

his well-known missive that they should cast blank ballots as an expression of protest. In a further sense, it has not incorrectly been described as Proudhon's bequest to the French working class. In light of this, and since the book has to my knowledge not yet been more thoroughly discussed in the German socialist press, a detailed outline of its content, insofar as the same is relevant to our object, seems to me to be entirely in order.

As its title indicates, the book wants to examine the question of the political maturity—that is how the word *capacité* is probably best translated here—of the working class. Political maturity, according to Proudhon, presupposes three things: first, that the personality, corporate body, or population *stratum* (*collectivité*) it applies to are conscious of themselves, of their societal role and interests; secondly, that they give expression to their "*idea*", i.e., they are able to clarify to themselves through their intellect the law of their existence in its principles and its consequences, translate it into words, and explain it through reason; thirdly, that they can draw *practical* conclusions from this idea, posited as a confession of faith, according to need and their respective circumstances. With regard to the working class, the problem poses itself as knowing: (a) whether the working class with respect to their relations towards the state and society has attained self-consciousness, whether it distinguishes itself as a collective, moral, and free entity from the bourgeoisie as a class; whether it knows how to separate its interests from the other's, and abides by not mistaking itself for the other;—(b) whether it has an *idea*, i.e., has crafted for itself a concept of its own nature (*de sa propre constitution*), knows the laws, conditions, and formulas of its existence, anticipates its determinations and ends, and whether it grasps itself in its relations towards the state, the nation, and general order;—(c) whether the working class is ultimately capable of drawing practical conclusions from this idea for the organisation of society, which are its own, and, if power falls to it through the decline or the abdication of the bourgeoisie, whether it can create and develop a new political order.

As one sees, Proudhon here fundamentally poses the same question that Lassalle set himself in the *Workers' Programme*, about which perhaps some details might have reached him, and it would in any case not be uninteresting to give a parallel examination of the line of thought that the two men pursued in their enquiry, who diverged so far in their conclusions, and yet in many respects were so similar to one another. However, here we must limit ourselves to characterising their respective conclusions. These are in both cases the same in the point that merely formal equality of rights, which has been proclaimed since the French Revolution, should

be extended to social equality; but whereas Lassalle describes as the outcome of the political idea of the workers' *stratum* the strengthening of the state, placed under the rule of the general franchise, Proudhon seeks by contrast, if not to abolish the state, then still to weaken it in every way vis-à-vis the "natural" elements of society. And while for Lassalle the general franchise in its traditional form should be the means of achieving this purpose, for Proudhon it was, on the contrary, the root cause of deception and oppression. Lassalle describes it as a bourgeois idea to let the state sink into society, whereas Proudhon makes precisely the maintenance of the principle of authority, whose expression is the state, the characteristic reproof towards the bourgeoisie. All this is explained by the particular conditions that each of the two had before their eyes, while both of them, despite frequent reference to these conditions, ultimately again and again make their deductions from certain derivative ideas. So it is no wonder that for Lassalle—in *Bastiat–Schulze*—Proudhon is no socialist at all and "was never an economist", whereas Proudhon would have inserted Lassalle's theory under the rubric of the "System of the Luxembourg" that he repudiated—both with emphatic appeal to "science".[59]

The "Luxembourg System"—a collective name that was undoubtedly chosen with polemical intention against Louis Blanc, whose followers wanted nothing to do with Proudhon's tactics of the blank ballots—is according to Proudhon

> fundamentally the same as the systems of Cabet, R. Owen, the Moravian Brethren, Campanella, More, Plato, the first Christians, etc., a communist system, governmental, dictatorial, authoritarian, doctrinaire; it proceeds from the principle that the individual is essentially subordinate to the collectivity; that from it alone he derives his right and his life; that the citizen belongs to the State as a child does to its family; that he is in its power and possession, *in manu*, and owes to it in all things subjection and obedience.[60]

In accordance with this principle,

> the school of the Luxembourg strives in theory and practice to transfer everything to the state, or, which amounts to the same, to the community: work, industry, property, commerce, public education, wealth, as well as legislation, justice, the police, public works, diplomacy, and war, so that afterward all of it is distributed and divided, in the name of the community or of the State, to each citizen, member of the great family, according to their qualities and needs.[61]

Yet this only meant preserving the old principle of society, which, whether it is now a matter of the society of Antiquity, feudalism, or the bourgeoisie, about that of divine right or the Revolution, is always called *authority*. And as in politics, so too in the economy. Property has been hitherto almost fundamentally only a concession of the state, as representative of the national community, only the way of applying this fundamental principle has varied, and by it being the goal of communism to bring all the fractions of the domain of the state again under its supreme authority, the democratic and social revolution was, according to the Luxembourg System, in principled respect only a reconstruction, i.e., a step back. Communism had turned their own artillery against the army of property-owners, like an army that seizes the cannons of the enemy; just as the slave always aped the master, so too the democrat had taken the autocrat as their model example. As a means of realisation, the Party of the Luxembourg had described and propagated the *association* [*Assoziation*]. But the idea of the association was not remotely new in the economic world, the states of divine right had founded the mightiest associations and provided the theory that bourgeois legislation recognised various kinds and forms of the same.

> What have the theorists of the Luxembourg contributed? Absolutely nothing. Now the association was for them a simple *community of goods and benefits* (§1836ff of the *Code Civil*); sometimes they made of it simple participation or *cooperation*, or even a collective society of limited partnership; more often, one understood workers' associations to mean powerful and numerous companies of workers, subsidised, funded, and directed by the State, attracting the working multitude, hoarding works and enterprises, invading the entirety of industry, all culture, all commerce, all functions, all property; creating a vacuum in private establishments and exploitations; obliterating and pulverising around them all individual action, all separate possession, all life, all freedom, all fortune, exactly as the great anonymous companies do today.[62]

It was the same with the political system of the school of the Luxembourg, it was always the old formula, but with communist exaggeration: the system of privilege turned against its previous protégés, aristocratic exploitation and despotism turned to the advantage of the mass; the

> servant state become the milking cow of the proletariat and nourished in the fields and pastures of the property-owners; in a word, a simple shift in favouritism.[63]

With respect to the ideas, the freedoms, justice, science—nothing. Only in one point does communism differ from the system of the bourgeois state: this maintains the family, whereas communism seeks to abolish it at any cost. Why?

> Because marriage, the family, is the fortress of individual freedom, because freedom is the guardstone of the state, and because, to consolidate this, to deliver it from all bothersome and constraining opposition, communism has not seen any other means than to deliver also women and children to the state, to the community, along with everything else.[64]

So far Proudhon's critique of the communist system, which evangelist Mühlberger claims "could have no equal in fitting brevity, acuteness of formulation, and destructive force."[65] No doubt, communism and what goes along with it is not the "idea" of the working class. But what is this idea? Now that would be mutualism. Proudhon proves this by means of the manifesto of the sixty workers who turned to him. The manner in which he uses this manifesto for his argument is one that Goethe already characterised as follows:

> Be bright and lively in expounding,
> If you can't expound, then pound it in.[66]

However, we will not go further into this here, but stick exclusively to Proudhon himself. Let us hear from him what new and better things mutualism teaches in all the matters wherein communism sins.

The "principle" of mutualism was, according to Proudhon, expressed for the first time in the famous maxims that the elders taught and the constitutions of the years II and III of the first French Republic laid down in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*:

> Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do unto you.
> Always do unto others the good that you would wish to receive from them.[67]

This principle presupposes that the individual to whom this admonition is issued, is firstly free and secondly knows how to distinguish good from evil, i.e., possesses the fundamental elements of justice. But freedom and justice elevate us well above the idea of authority resting on community or on divine right, on which the Luxembourg System relies.

> Hitherto, however, the fine maxim above was only a kind of counsel for peoples, in the language of moralist theologians. But through the importance that it is given today, and by the manner in which the working masses demand that it be applied, it tends to become a *precept*, to take on a decidedly obligatory character, in a word, to attain *the force of law*.[68]

So *par ordre du mufti*, we must be exemplary humans. Our freedom, which was just promised to us, is thereby already somewhat dulled.

But that was only the principle, let us now look at the "idea" of mutualism more closely. Proudhon instructs us:

> The French word *mutuel*, *mutualité*, *mutuation*, which is equivalent in meaning to *reciprocal*, *reciprocity*, comes from the Latin *mutuum*, which signifies a loan (for consumption), and in a broader sense, exchange. We know that with the consumer loan, the loaned object is consumed by the borrower, who only returns the equivalent, either in the same kind or in some other form. Suppose that the lender becomes a borrower in turn, you will have a mutual lending, an exchange as a result: that is the logical connection that has given the same name to two different operations. Nothing is more elementary than this notion: so I will not insist any further on its logical and grammatical side. What interests us is to understand how, based on this idea of mutuality, reciprocity, exchange, *justice*—substituted for those of authority, community, or charity—one has come to build a system of relations in politics or in political economy that strives for nothing less than to overturn the social order from the ground up.[69]

The matter is frightfully simple. Adherents of individual freedom have opposed to the governmental perspective the idea

> that society must be regarded not as a hierarchy of offices and capacities, but rather as a system of equilibrium between free forces … that the state is merely the result of the free association of equal, independent persons wishing for justice; that hence it only represents grouped freedoms and interests; that all debate between Power and this or that citizen reduces to a debate between citizens; that, as a consequence, there is no other prerogative within society than liberty, no other supremacy than that of the Law. Authority and charity, they say, have had their time; in place of them we wish for justice. From these premises, radically opposed to those of the Luxembourg, they settle on an organisation that follows the mutualist principle in its widest scope.—Service for a service, they say, product for a product, loan for a loan, insurance for insurance, credit for credit, surety for

> surety, guarantee for guarantee, etc.: that is the law. It is a kind of inverted application of the ancient talion: *eye for an eye*, *tooth for a tooth*, *life for a life*, transported from criminal law and the atrocious practices of the *vendetta* into economic law, the activities of labour, and the good offices of free fraternity. From this stem all the institutions of mutualism: mutual insurances, mutual credit, mutual aid, mutual tuition; reciprocal guarantees of market sales, exchange, labour, of good quality and a fair price of merchandise, etc. Here is what mutualism hopes, with the aid of certain institutions, to turn into a principle of the State, a law of the State, I will almost say a sort of State religion, the practice of which will be as easy for citizens as it will be advantageous for them; which requires neither police nor repression nor coercion, and which can in no case become for anyone a cause of deception and ruin.[70]

Let us pause here for a moment. Before us lies another book, and in it we read:

> Yes, gentlemen, but as an *economic principle*, as foundation for the order and regulation of the household, of human beings' professional life, there we cannot possibly set up *fraternity*. The foundation for these relations, as we have seen when we spoke about exchange and justified self-interest, is *reciprocity*. "*Nothing without compensation*! *A service for a service*!", so goes the saying according to which the economic intercourse of human beings regulates itself. … But just as *reciprocity* is the principle for economic life, so is *justice* the foundation for political state life.[71]

The book in which that can be read is called *Chapter on a German Workers' Catechism*, and its author is—Schulze-Delitzsch. How joyous that the typical representative of enlightened German philistinism had recognised the "idea of the working class" no less than Proudhon, "to whom ever and ever all must go back who would lay bare the roots of the new creed of no authority."[72] And one should not believe that this agreement lies only in their words. Countless parallel points evidence that such agreement applies in fact to their *principle*, and their agreement in their "devastating critique of communism" is truly moving. Anybody who is interested in this can look this up more closely themselves on pp. 82–9 of Schulze's book, and pp. 52–63 and 70–1 of Proudhon's. The end of the story here as well as there is the prophecy of general *lumpenisation* and an increase in misery should socialism, the System of the Luxembourg, govern society.

However, let us go from the development of the idea to its application in Proudhon.

The first example that Proudhon gives is insurance on the basis of reciprocity, in contrast to insurance against fixed premiums. Whatever the advantages of the former, it is an institution that is thoroughly conducive to bourgeois interests. The second example is the improvement of the law of supply and demand by the principle of mutuality. Today, with supply and demand, now the buyer, now the seller is short-changed, and sometimes the two even con one another. But there is a remedy against this disgraceful situation, and that is—the fixed price.

> It is certain that sale at fixed prices presupposes more good faith and presents more dignity than sale through horse-trading. Suppose that all negotiators and producers were to shift to using it, we would have mutuality in supply and demand. Doubtless, someone who sells at a fixed price can be in error about the value of the merchandise; but notice that he is restrained, on the one hand by competition, on the other by the enlightened freedom of the buyer. … And does one know what would follow from such a principle? Doubtless fewer fortunes of such a vast size could be made, and so quickly; but there would also be fewer insolvencies and bankruptcies, fewer ruinations and despairs. A country where things cannot be given except for what they are worth, without the hunt for agios [*M.O.—speculative premiums*], would have solved the double problem of value and equality.[73]

Famously, the fixed price is the rule at the developed stage of bourgeois intercourse. Where large-scale industry and modern large-scale commerce reign, Proudhon's ideal is pretty much implemented, but defaults and bankruptcies have not for that reason ceased.

The third example of the application of mutuality refers to labour and wages. Since mutuality, as Proudhon stresses anew, consists in the exchange of valuable services and products, the question is posed as follows: how to procure and secure for the worker a fair exchange for their labour, that is, a fair wage? After some reflections about the physical and intellectual differences between people, whereby just like the evil communists he comes to the outcome that deviations from the average *niveau* both in number and in scale are far less than they are commonly held to be, Proudhon defines the normal working day as follows:

> It consists of what in every industry and every job a man of average strength, intelligence, and average age, knowing well his business and its various aspects, can accomplish in terms of service provided or value produced, over a given interval, be it ten, twelve, or fifteen hours in the occupations where

> work is evaluated on a day-by-day basis; be it a week, a month, a season, a year for those that require a longer space of time.[74]

For children, women, the aged, the sick, the working day is only "a fraction of the official, normal, legal (!) working day, which serves as a unit of value"; the same for suboperative workers, "whose purely mechanical effort, which requires less intelligence than it does routine, cannot be compared with that of a true industrial worker". Conversely, the worker who grasps things more quickly and works faster must deliver more and better work, and even more so the one who combines this superiority with the genius of leadership and the ability to command, will receive an appropriately higher wage. But this increase will not be out of a preference for the person, but only one for their abilities, which justice will always recognise.

But how now to reach this fine goal? Two things are necessary for this. Firstly,

> that the working society attain that level of industrial and economic morality that all people submit to the justice that is done to them, without concern for pretensions of vanity and personality, without consideration of any titles, ranks, status, honorific distinction, of fame, in a word of their value in people's opinion. Only the usefulness of a product, its constitution, labour, and the costs that it requires may be taken into account here.[75]

Secondly, workers' democracy must take the question in hand.

> If it speaks out, the state, the organ of society, will have to act under the pressure of its opinion. If workers' democracy, satisfied with conducting agitation in its workshops, with haranguing the bourgeois, and with making itself known in useless elections, remains indifferent on the principles of political economy, which are those of revolution, it should know that it is neglecting its duties and one day will be branded before posterity.[76]

We rub our eyes in disbelief. The state should act, all should subject themselves to the justice allotted to them, personalities should take a step back. So where have all the fine freedoms that we were promised beforehand got to? Here, where a question is at issue in which the workers are quite immediately interested, we find ourselves suddenly in the most beautiful "System of the Luxembourg". The state should act. Very well. After everything that has been said here, one cannot assume anything other than that it should determine through law what should be the normal

wage and what the gradations of it should be, expressly there was even talk above about a "legal wage". But how to force the individual business-owner to abide by this legal norm?

> The evaluation of works, the continuously renewed measurement of values is the fundamental problem of society a problem that only social will and the power of the collectivity can solve,

it says here, whereas above in the critique of communism it stated that authority, whether one let it come from the sky above or, along with Rousseau, derived it from the national collectivity, as the fundamental principle of the old society, a reconstruction, is reactionary.[77] And if we flick through the entirety of Proudhon, we do not find a solution to this contradiction anywhere.

Commercial exchange, with all its reciprocal defrauding, is reformed in a trice by mutualism.

> Not by swaddling it in a net of more or less petty and almost always fruitless penal prescriptions; not by constraining the freedom of commerce, a cure that is far worse than the disease: but by treating commerce as an insurance, I want to say by surrounding it with all public guarantees and thereby leading it to mutuality.[78]

The following are the measures by which this fine result will be achieved: detailed and often-renewed statistics, precise information about needs and supply inventories, a faithful itemised list of cost prices, the anticipation of all eventualities and, after prior friendly discussion between producers, traders, and consumers, fixing a set rate of maximum and minimum profits, depending on the difficulties and risks, as well as the organisation of regulation associations. As much freedom as one wishes, but what is even more important than freedom, sincerity and reciprocity, light for all. If this is taken care of, then customers will go to the most diligent and the most honest seller.

> Does one not believe that after several years of this reform, our commercial morals will not be entirely changed, to the great advantage of general happiness?[79]

A likely story!, goes the proverb, but since now almost all the fine little means of this commercial reform already exist, without having brought about the beatific effect the prospect of which was held out to us, then we cannot help ourselves if we hear the tidings well, it is only that our faith is wanting.

Variatio delectat, variety gladdens the heart. After a reform on the basis of the highest freedom, again another one by means of the authority of the law. It is now a matter of the question on all the world's lips, the question of housing [*Wohnungsfrage*]. What virtuous temperament is not outraged about the high rents and profits of the landlords?

> One point where the law of mutuality is infringed in the most extreme way is rental contracts. ...
>
> Here the old Roman law still reigns, this antique tyrannical cult of property.[80]

The law favours the proprietor, and treats the renter with suspicion. There is no equality between them, hence there is general hardship while the proprietors become millionaires. But

> there is nothing easier to discipline than the rental contract under the regime of mutuality, without violating the law of supply and demand, and under strict observance of the prescriptions of pure justice.

For this, there are three means, "which are just as flawless as they are infallible":

1. Application of the legal provisions for moneylending to housing contracts. Since the law of 1807 prescribes a maximum of 6% for the former in business affairs, nothing could be more just than to say to landlords: "Since you profit from this limit more than anyone else, you will in turn submit to general law; the same interest that you pay your banker, to your outfitters, you will yourself be paid. Reciprocity is justice."
2. "Another means to keep in check built property would be to incorporate the value of social right into the surplus value of landholdings where this derives from circumstances extraneous to the action of property-owners. I will not go further into this."
3. Rental contracts are legally equivalised to commercial contracts, and thereby all privileges of proprietors are abolished. More than that, a consequence of this equalisation, in unified combination with the first two measures, would be that "through the authority housing statistics are put up; better control over sanitary conditions is organised; Masonic societies could be formed to buy landholdings, for construction, for the maintenance and the location of housing, in competition with the former property-owners and in the interest of all."[81]

Only two comments on this. Firstly, part of these reform proposals have already been implemented, while the rest is included in the programme of bourgeois parties, and constitutes one of their primary means of agitation. For however much the working class suffers under housing conditions today, great swathes of the bourgeoisie suffer from this too. Secondly, there is very little to be seen of mutuality in all three measures. Everywhere it reads: Legislation, Community, Authority to the rescue! In other words, a threefold retreat to the "System of the Luxembourg".

It is no different with mutualism in transportation, and on more precise inspection also with mutualism of credit. With reference to the former, Proudhon attacks Louis Philippe's government on account of its franchising of private railway companies, and says that if it had grasped that it alone had to be the organ of the relations of solidarity and mutuality, it would have organised the transport service itself, or transferred it to workers' associations to be carried out according to the principles of economic equality and reciprocity. In relation to credit, Proudhon writes that his "people's bank" of 1849 was only meant to serve as a way to economically educate the people, but that for the creation of the *credit mutuel* the entire strength of a collective, expressly reformatory will would be required.

> Not through dissociations, through insignificant attempts at competition, and even less through philanthropic grants or subscriptions out of loyal devotion, will mutual credit be realised in Europe.[82]

And at another point he protests against the freedom of the note-issuing banks demanded "by certain partisans of economic anarchy", and "reminds" us that

> every public service organised in the form that it costs consumers nothing or almost nothing is a work of the collectivity acting by itself and for itself, work that is hence as much outside the *communauté* as its is beyond centralisation.[83]

Whether he calls the thing *communauté* or something else, the collectivity that institutes public services that acts by itself, etc., is the organised community [*Gemeinschaft*], i.e., for the time being the political commune [*Gemeinde*] or the state.

The final economic category by means of which Proudhon proves the unsurpassable efficacy of mutuality is that of the association [*Assoziation*].

In his earlier writings, he attacked with great vehemence the workers' associations [*Arbeiter-Assoziationen*], in particular Blanc's idea of the organisation of labour, which all the same did not prevent him, when he founded his cooperative bank, from turning for help to precisely these associations, any more than the help afforded by the associations on that occasion held him back from afterwards—in the *Confessions of a Revolutionary*—speaking about these associations in exactly the same dismissive way.

The contradiction resolves itself in the present work. Proudhon's condemnatory verdict was not intended for the association as such, but rather the association without Proudhonian mutuality. The association, he explains here, is an economic force like the division of labour, cooperation, machinery, competition, exchange, credit, property, etc.[84] However, the greatest economic force, the force of all forces, one is tempted to say the force-in-itself, is mutualism.

> But of all economic forces, the greatest, the most sacred, the one that, in its combinations of work, reunites all the conceptions of spirit and the justifications of conscience, is mutuality, in which one can say that all the others will be confounded. By mutuality the other economic forces enter into law; they become, to put it this way, integral parts of the Right of Man and of the Producer: without that they would remain indifferent to social good as well as ill; there is nothing obligatory about them; they do not reveal in themselves any moral element whatsoever. …
>
> Certainly, the association, seen from its good side, is lovely and fraternal: may it please God that I do not lower it in the eyes of the people! … But the association in itself, and without a pervasive idea of right to dominate it, is no less for that reason an incidental bond based on pure physiological and interested sentiment; a free contract, revocable at will; a closed group, whose members one may always say are only associated for themselves, and are associated against everyone else in the world: in this way, then, the legislator understood it: and he could not have understood it any other way.[85]

Proudhon first and foremost produces as proofs for his condemnation of all associations not filled with the spirit of mutualism the "great capitalist associations, organised in the spirit of mercantile and industrial feudalism", for which it is a matter of "seizing fabrication, turnover, and profits". Even what he says in criticism of them is often very open to challenge, but since the object does not belong to our topic, we will not go into it any further, but instead turn immediately to his critique of workers' associations.

> What was at stake in the workers' associations according to the System of the Luxembourg? To replace the capitalist associations by the coalition of workers, and by means of state subsidies, that is to say, by the centralisation of business, the concentration of workers, and the superiority of capital, to always wage war on free industry and commerce. In place of the hundred or two hundred thousand licenced enterprises that there are in Paris, there would have been no more than a hundred or so great associations, representing the diverse branches of industry and commerce, where the working population would have been regimented and definitively subjugated by the *raison d'état* of fraternity, as it tends to be presently by the *raison d'état* of capital. What would freedom, public happiness, and civilisation have gained there? Nothing. We would have exchanged our chains, and, which is even sadder and which shows the sterility of legislators, fantasists, and reformers, the social idea would not have advanced a single step; we would still find ourselves under the same arbitrariness, not to say find itself under the same economic fatalism.[86]

Already this short overview reveals that

> the ones like the others [Ed. B.—i.e., the communist like the capitalist associations] were founded for particular goals and in view of egoistic interests; that nothing about them reveals a reformist thought, a superior view of civilisation, the slightest care for progress and general destiny; that, on the contrary, they proceed after the model of individuals, in an anarchic mode, that they could never be considered anything other than small churches organised against the great one in whose bosom and at whose expense they live.[87]

So it continues for a while further, whereby Proudhon raises the question of whether it "occurs even to a single person that all these associations should dissolve into one another and form one and the same general society", and closes by saying:

> so if the associations are different, then they will also by the nature of things rival one another; their interests will diverge; there will be contradictions and hostilities between them. You will never get beyond this.[88]

Whichever one of the communists or socialists who have come out in favour of associations we consult, we will find not a single one to whom the aforesaid critique of Proudhon's fits. With all of them, the association is only the means to a higher purpose: to raise the workers and with them humanity to a higher level. The individual association is, where it appears, always

imagined only as a transitional stage, the combination of associations into one great solidary community is everywhere the final goal. One can doubt whether the associations are the most appropriate means to achieve this goal, but to insinuate that the socialists merely want to replace the capitalist collective affiliations [*Verbindungen*] with workers' affiliations, without offering any new ideas about the fundamental principle of societal relations, does mean making this criticism rather too easy for oneself. Even for Louis Blanc's associative project, of which one is always first reminded with Proudhon, this critique fits like chalk to cheese. Proudhon imputes flaws to it that it does not contain, in order then to lay into them with all the greater force. However, that is just his method, which we have already come to know on other occasions—we need only recall his critique of Ricardo. Let us see how he cures the alleged flaws of the communist associations through mutuality.

> But one will say to me, have we not, to reconcile our associations with each other and to make them live peaceably without dissolving them, the principle of mutuality? …
>
> *À la bonne heure*. Already mutuality appears as the *deus ex machina*. So let us grasp what it teaches us; and, to start, let us establish that mutuality is not the same thing as association, and, as great a friend of liberty as it is of the group, it shows itself equally removed from all fantasy as from all intolerance.—
>
> We were just speaking about the *division of labour*. A consequence of this economic force is that it both engenders specialisation and creates sources [*foyers*] of independence, which implies the separation of enterprises, exactly the opposite of what the agitators [*fauteurs*] for communist associations, like those for capitalist associations, are striving for. Thus, combined with the law of the natural grouping of populations into regions, cantons, communes, quarters, streets, the division of labour leads to this decisive consequence: that not only each industrial specialism is called to develop and act in full and complete independence, under conditions of mutuality, of responsibility, and of guarantee that form the general condition of society; but that it is likewise the case for the industrialists who, in their respective localities, each individually represent a work specialism: in principle, these industrialists should remain free. The division of labour, freedom, competition, political and social equality, the dignity of Man and the Citizen do not permit any replacement institutions [*succursales*].[89]

The most devout parroter of all the commonplaces of liberal economics could not speak any differently. The division of labour creates—economic independence. That means going back almost to before Adam Smith. The cottage industrialist, who in their miserable dwelling manufactures some

special article for the large factory-owner is, according to Proudhon, the archetype of economic freedom. The same, it seems, is true of the suboperation worker in the factory who works for piecework wages. In fact, in the fourth chapter of his work, Proudhon lets his "sixty" corroborate the "freedom of labour, which was condemned by the Luxembourg in the question of piecework." An unpardonable crime by the Luxembourg, not to have halted respectfully before this form of exploitation, cloaked in the garb of freedom.

But let us hear further:

> It follows from this that the principle of mutuality, where the association is concerned, consists in associating people only where the exigencies of production, the cheapness of products, the needs of consumption, the safety of the producers themselves require it, where it is not possible either for the public to sustain that particular industry, nor for it to bear alone the burdens of the business-enterprises and their risks. …
>
> This side of the mutualist idea, as it emerges from the most vigorous sympathies of the petty-bourgeois, petty industrialists, and petty traders agreeable to the new democracy.
>
> Is this a question of large-scale production in the manufacturing, extractive, metal, and maritime industry? It is clear that there is a place for the association here: nobody would contest this anymore. Is it, however, a question of one of these great enterprises that have the character of a public service, such as the railways, the credit institutions, the docks? I proved elsewhere that it is a law of mutuality that these services, excluding all capital profit, are delivered to the public at the price equivalent to the cost of exploitation and maintenance. In this case too, it is entirely evident that the guarantee of good execution and cheapness cannot be provided either by monopoly companies or by *communautés* patronised by the State, exploiting in the name of the State, and at the cost of the State. This guarantee can only come from free associators [*sociétaires*], obligated on the one hand towards the public by the contract of mutuality, and on the other hand obligated towards one another by the conventional associative contract.[90]

But where "the thousand occupations and shops are concerned, which exist in such great number in the state and the country", Proudhon sees with reference to them

> the need for and the usefulness of the association even less given that the advantage that one could expect to gain from it is provided by the ensemble of mutualist guarantees, reciprocal insurances, reciprocal credit, market police, etc.[91]

More than that,

> presupposing these guarantees, in the cases we are discussing, there is more certainty for the public in dealing with a single businessman than if it has to do with an entire company. …
>
> The trader is above all the distributor of products, whose qualities, manufacture, origin, and value he has to know. He has to keep the consumers in his district abreast of prices, new articles, the risks of price increases, the likelihood of decreases. It is continuous work, which strains their intelligence, zeal, and honesty, and which, I repeat, in the new conditions in which mutualism places us, does not require any guarantee, suspect in other respects, of a great association. For public certainty, it is enough here to undertake a general reform of morals through principles. So I ask myself: why should such economic individuality disappear? What do we have to interfere here? Let us organise the law and let the boutique keep existing.—*Organisons le droit et laissons faire la boutique.*
>
> Let us repeat: It cannot here be about undoing positions that have been achieved; it is simply about, through the reduction of the rent for capital and lodging, through the easing and cheapening of discount rates, the elimination of parasitism, the extirpation of share-trading [*agiotage*], the policing of markets and storage, the lowering of transport costs, the equilibration of values, the better education given to the working classes, the final preponderance of labour over capital, the fair measurement of esteem for talent and function—through all that, I say, it is about restoring to work and to probity what the capitalist tithe unjustly takes from them … in a word, to put an end to all anomalies and disturbances which healthy criticism has at all times shown to be the chronic causes of misery and of the proletariat.
>
> But why argue over words and waste time on fruitless discussions? One thing is sure, namely that the people, whatever one may say, has faith in the Association, that it affirms it, presses for it, and proclaims it, and that meanwhile it is nothing other than the contract of society defined by our legal codes. Let us then conclude, to remain true to our faith in the gifts of science and in the people's aspirations, that the Association, whose formula the contemporary innovators have sought after as if the legislator had never mentioned anything about it, but which none of them was able to define … the Association, which workers' democracy incessantly appeals to as the end of all serfdom and the superior form of civilisation, who does not see that it is not and cannot be anying other than MUTUALITY? Is mutuality, in fact, whose outlines we have tried to trace, not the social contract *par excellence*, at the same time political and economic, reciprocally unifying [*synallagmatique*] and commutative, which encompasses at the same time, in such simple terms, the individual and the family, the corporation and the city, selling

> and buying, credit, insurance, labour, education, and property; every profession, every transaction, every service, every guarantee; which, in its highly regenerative scope, rules out all egoism, all parasitism, all arbitrariness, all speculation [*agiotage*], all dissolution? Do we not truly find in it this mysterious association, which was dreamed up by the utopians but has remained unknown to philosophers and legal scholars, and which we can define with two terms: the *contract of mutuation*, or of *mutuality*?[92]

In a note to this, Proudhon protests that he has not pursued any vain drive of personal thirst for glory if he has described mutuality as the formula of the economic revolution instead of the association; only the interest of scientific precision had guided him in doing so. The word association is too vague, it speaks less to our intelligence than to our feeling and does not have the character of universality demanded in such circumstances. Also, there are all manner of possible kinds of associations, and after all, it is clear that three-quarters, if not four-fifths of a modern nation, property-owners, crop farmers, petty industrialists, authors, artists, officials, etc., could never be societally unified. If one does not now wish to declare these beyond reform from now on, beyond the Revolution, one would have to admit that the word "society", "association", does not fulfil its scientific purpose, and find a new one that combines simplicity and resilience with the universality of a principle. Ultimately, he had already previously argued that in the new democracy, the political principle would have to be aligned with the economic one and be identical to it, but the latter had long since been expressed and defined—"it is the principle of federalism, which is equivalent in meaning to mutuality, to reciprocal guarantee, and which has nothing in common with the principle of association".[93]

In the text, the chapter closes with a further *apologia* on the "new pact" created by mutuality. However narrowly-delimited it might seem in its beginnings, the mutualist association—the name that "we can give it from now on"—still contains within itself a capacity for development, which strives with irresistible force to assimilate and annex everything that surrounds it, and to shape the surrounding humanity and the state in its image. The cadres of the mutualist association are open to all, it knows no exclusion, it is by nature unrestricted in relation to persons, which is the opposite of every other association. The same applies to the objects it relates to: it strives to involve all the industries with which it is more closely or distantly connected in its system of guarantees, it is "of unlimited force in affiliation". And it is the same with its duration. Since, above all, it is

founded on an idea of right and the economic realisation of the same, the mutualist association brooks no temporal restriction.

> Mutuality or the mutualist society is justice itself; and one does not take backwards strides in matters of justice any more than in matters of religion … People who have made a pact of integrity, loyalty, guarantee, honour, cannot say when they separate [Ed. B.—if this has become necessary through material failures]: We made a mistake; now we will become liars and scoundrels again; we will have more to gain.[94]

And, the final good aspect of mutualist society: the procurement of capital is in it no longer an imperative condition; "to be an associate, it is enough to observe reciprocal fidelity and faith in transactions".

> … Once the generations are transformed through mutualist law, then nothing whatsoever stands in the way of private associations continuing to form as they currently do, with the object of either exploiting an industrial specialism, or running a business, in pursuit of their own benefit. But these associations, which could even keep their current designations, are subjected to one another and to the public vis-à-vis the duty of mutuality; imbued by a new spirit, they could no longer compare themselves with their equivalents today. They would have lost their egoistic, subversive character while preserving the particular advantages that they derive from their economic power. They would be just so many individual churches in the bosom of the universal Church, capable of recreating it anew, if it were possible that it ever died out.[95]

With that, enough. We have been as thorough as possible, so that we do not misappropriate even one concept that is valuable for Proudhon's idea of mutuality, especially as here we are dealing with a work from Proudhon's most mature period, the period of his "complete clarification", to speak once again with his German evangelist Mühlberger. And as what, if we summarise everything, does this "idea of mutuality", which is "justice", now present itself to us? Quite simply as the glorification of *exchange*. "Honest exchange", which already lurked in Proudhon's first work about property, is the alpha and omega of the earthshattering idea of mutualism, which is to regenerate humankind. If all societal relations are restored to a pure exchange relationship [*Tauschverhältnis*], and this exchange always happens honestly, nobody cheats anybody else, then the empire of freedom and justice is at hand, and humanity redeemed from all its evils.[96]

But what does honest exchange mean? An exchange in which things that are equal in value are given for one another, Proudhon answers us. And what is equivalent in value? With Ricardo, whom he constantly tears down, Proudhon declares: whatever costs the same amounts of human labour. But now famously not all human labour is equal. Peter is skilful and works swiftly, Paul is clumsy and works slowly, Fritz is working with an old-fashioned hand tool, Hans at a mechanical lathe driven by some natural force. Are the products of an hour of labour by Peter and Paul, by Hans and Fritz, equal in value? Where Peter and Paul are concerned, we have seen in the section about wages that according to Proudhon, their labour is *not* equal in value, Peter must be paid more highly than Paul, whereas in relation to Hans and Fritz, Proudhon leaves us in the dark. Although he says that whoever carries out more and better work should be paid more highly, and that would, thanks to his better work tool, after all probably be Hans, but Hans is perhaps only a suboperation worker in a modern factory, and Fritz works in his little workshop, and there again, according to Proudhon, Hans must receive fewer wages than Fritz. So we stand before an unresolved contradiction, even though the society of honest exchange is supposed to put an end to the "confusion" of contradictory political economy.

However, let us let this contradiction rest, and see further how things go with Peter and Paul. Peter is supposed to be paid more than Paul. By what criterion? According to the quantity [*Menge*] and quality [*Güte*] of finished work. Who determines this criterion, who fixes the normal quota [*Quantum*] and the normal character [*Beschaffenheit*] for every category of labour? Here suddenly the "social will", the "power of society" cropped up, as we have further seen, and behind them "the state, the organ of society". Under the pressure of the expressed will of the workers' democracy, it said, *the state*, *the organ of society*, *must act*, and the workers were threatened with being branded before posterity if they did not agitate for this with the required energy. We have already shown how much Proudhon flies in the face of his explicit condemnation of the "Luxembourg" with this idea of state wage regulation: it is at the same time the most decided negation of "free exchange". Here, we want to leave entirely undiscussed the question of feasibility given the otherwise unhindered working of free competition, but rather satisfy ourselves with verifying that in relation to the remuneration of human labour power, "honest exchange" is realised through the suspension of "free exchange".

Here, Proudhon is so much an enemy of the free action of workers that he cannot express himself disparagingly enough about the workers' coalitions for wage increases and shorter working times. The individual worker may, if need be—so long as "social justice" does not award them their wage, with which they then kindly have to be satisfied—try to attain as good a remuneration as possible; they may associate with other workers in order to compete with the capitalist business-owners, but, as soon as they form coalitions with their work colleagues [*Arbeitsgenossen*] in order to exert stronger pressure on their masters to approve higher wages and shorter working time, they are sinning against "social morality". In this point too, Proudhon at the end of his career cleaves to the same standpoint as at the start of it. What he wrote in the *Philosophy of Poverty* against coalitions, he not only repeats but also strengthens further in the *Political Capacity*.[97] He cannot chide the liberal republicans, who in the 1860s opposed the Empire, harshly enough for interceding in favour of the workers' right to form coalitions. For him, the workers' coalitions do not differ in any way from the business-owners' coalitions for enforcing monopoly prices. He declares:

> The law that permits coalitions is fundamentally anti-juristic, anti-economic, and opposed to every society and every order.[98]

And then again:

> One pretended to believe that, since the bosses were already through their higher position and their low number in a position to form coalitions unpunished, the only side to be taken by the legislator was to equalise conditions, by placing the workers on the same footing as their masters, and disburdening the tribunals of any manner of pursuits. Reader, what do you say to this invention? … Follow this fine principle of neutralising crimes and offences by allowing everyone to commit them, and tell me what need Society could have for a Government after that?
>
> Likewise, under the pretext of raising up the working class from its so-called social inferiority, you will have to begin by denouncing *en masse* an entire class of citizens: the class of masters, business-owners, bosses, and bourgeois; you will have to rouse workers' democracy to disdain and hatred for these repugnant and inconceivable coalitions of the middle class; you will have to choose mercantile and industrial warfare over legal repression; class antagonism to the State police; the régime of force to the discipline of the law; and, despite this baleful necessity, the Opposition will not protest; it will

> not try to enlighten the Government when, in its unthinking liberalism, preoccupied with the welfare of the workers, cries without knowing it: Up against the bourgeois! On the contrary, it will answer: Kill, kill![99]

But towards the workers, Proudhon feels himself justified, as the herald of the idea of mutuality, in making, *inter alia*, the following reproach:

> Under threat of strikes, some, the great number, demanded a rise in wages, the others a reduction in working hours; some both at the same. As if you did not know, from long experience, that raising wages and the reduction in working hours cannot lead to anything other than general price inflation; as if you could ignore the fact that here it is not at all about a reduction or an increase in prices and wages, but about a general equalisatsion [*péréquation*], the first condition of wealth! They went too far. By raising wages, they thought they could impose the equality they sought. A sad reminder of the Luxembourg, which the manifesto of the Sixty had condemned, while strongly recognising free competition.[100]

Outside mutuality and the association purified by it of all dross, nothing but doom threatens the working class, saith the prophet. Woe unto it if it goes any other way than the one he has preordained for it. But despite the prophet resting his anathema on the wisdom of the most orthodox of all economists, the workers have pushed through wage increases and shorter working times without "general inflation" setting in.

To the way in which, under mutuality, every product achieves "honest exchange" and the "realisation of its full value", we will not even go into here. The recipes that we have come to know in discussing the chapters about trade and supply and demand have nothing more to them than certain pieces of advice, which one will find in every textbook for budding businesspeople. In part, they are things that are self-evident, which already in Proudhon's time lacked the allure of novelty, in part pious wishes whose realisation can only be counted on where they coincide with the interest of the participants. But all of these only represent—precisely as their author intends—modifications of bourgeois competition, but are on no account supposed to break with it. And for that reason it is nonsense to expect of them the wonder of realising the "value" of every product. The law of value of bourgeois competition, or, in other words, of commodity-producing society, consists precisely in the fact that the value is only realised in the fluctuations of prices. The "set price", on which Proudhon

pins such great hopes, can change no more about this than calibrated gauges can perhaps act as means against the fluctuations of beer prices. In the best case, it means a more precise alignment of the prices of the smaller market to the price fluctuations of the greater market—in the last instance, to the changes in the relations of production; but often enough it is a pure formality, in which everything possible comes out, only not the blue flower of Proudhonian Romanticism: the "absolute value" placed in "equilibrium" with all others of its equivalent kind.

In fact, this yearning for the "equilibrium of values"—a term that all Proudhonians venerate as a magic formula that opens the gates of the Palace of the Blest—is nothing but the purest Romanticism, the wish to elevate oneself beyond bourgeois society, without changing anything about its fundamental economic conditions. With all its fibres, Proudhonism clings to bourgeois, commodity-producing society. Even the most audacious of his economic reforms does not go beyond it, and nine-tenths of them consist of generalisations and above all rechristenings of institutions that are already found on its terrain. His morality, his ideal of justice, is nothing but the ideological apotheosis of commodity exchange, the rights-conception of the commodity producer, and nothing is hence more perverse than wanting to elevate bourgeois society beyond itself by preaching this morality, summoned up from bourgeois conditions. The "idea" of mutualism is "honest" exchange, exchange in which nothing is given and nothing is taken without equivalent counter-value; but this "honest" exchange is the practice of the inveterate *bourgeois*: they fundamentally give nothing without also taking something in return. Precisely for him, society presents itself as the great exchange shop [*Tauschanstalt*], which mutualism deludes itself that it must develop in order "to emancipate labour". To damn the practice of the bourgeois and in the same breath hold it up as an ideal has forever been the wont of petty-bourgeois doctrine, and anyone to whom the verdict that Marx passes on Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* still seems too harsh, who after everything developed here can still, with the German professors, consider it to be the product of some personal rancour if Proudhon, at a time when he still counted to the world as an ultra-revolutionary, was described as an arch-petty-bourgeois, they may even now examine the rueful wail with which Proudhon closes his book about the *Political Capacity of the Working Class*, because the French workers started to coalesce into trade unions instead of associating with each other in a mutualist way:

> This middle class, into whose bosom the better-advised workers' democracy a year ago declared it wished to dissolve itself entirely, does it not seem that one is working on all sides with a sort of fanaticism to demolish it, that one wants to take it down to the level of wage-workers? Every day, insolvency tears large holes in the ranks of the petty-bourgeois; what is all the more unbearable, their desperate need continues, their life from hand to mouth, their secret misery decimates them. The workers have seen nothing but their own sufferings; they know nothing of the tribulations of the bourgeois. Through the law on coalitions, they have become the auxiliaries of capitalist aristocracy against petty industry, petty commerce, and petty property; in 1869, they will doubtless vote for the candidates of the administration; that would be logical. Free coalition, free usury, free exchange will deserve this proof of their faithlessness against their natural allies. Yet let them be clear about this: it is not through such contradictory behaviour that they will succeed in taking the lead of civilisation and reforming society. It is not by surrendering themselves as venal souls to fantasies of counter-revolution [Ed B.—he means counter-revolution against the "freedoms and guarantees of 1789"!] that they will make people believe in the power of their Idea, nor believe that their political capacity is raising itself to the level of economic science.[101]

* * *

After we have got to know mutualism in this way from out of Proudhon's mouth himself, let us also hear what the anarchist who swears by Proudhon today has to say about it.

What in the confusion of the day, the father could not comprehend, perhaps because it was too near him, the son—writes Mackay of Auban Jr., who drew the final conclusion of the doctrine—was to grasp in its entire range and tremendous significance: that each one by means of the principle of mutualism, and independently of the State, could exchange his labour at its full value, and thus in one word—make himself free!

He now saw what it was that Proudhon had meant by property: not the product of labour, which he had always defended against Communism, but the legal privileges of that product as they weigh upon labour in the forms of usury, principally as interest and rent, and obstruct its free circulation; that with Proudhon equality was nothing but equality of rights, and fraternity not self-sacrifice, but prudent recognition of one's own interests in the light of mutualism; that he championed voluntary association for a definite purpose in opposition to the compulsory association of the State, "to maintain equality in the means of production and equivalence in exchange" as "the only possible, the only just, the only true form of society".[102]

Auban in Mackay has admirably memorised Proudhon's turn of phrase. He naturally has no clue about the fact that with "to exchange his labour at its full *value*", sofar as there lies any meaning whatsoever in this statement, it is a privilege of the worker in modern society; but it is a wonderful-sounding phrase—so keep it coming! No less wonderful does the "free circulation of labour" sound, which is only inhibited by the "legal privileges of the product of labour", so keep that coming too! That this statement partly swallows up the first one again, what does it matter? After all, we saw the master in one breath proscribing the state, and then becoming outraged that "instead of the State police", instead of "legal oppression", the class struggle was set free. Only someone can stumble against such contradictions who has not grasped the deeper meaning that underpins them. And so we also want to console ourselves with the fact that Proudhon, the "father of Anarchy", to whom "ever and ever all must go back who would lay bare the roots of the new creed of no authority", in the *Capacity* opposes the mutualist idea, "which today constitutes the foundation of democratic emancipation", to the "*anarchic or bourgeois idea*".[103] But after all, we know that despite this, "mutualist" and "anarchic ideas" are close relatives, daughters of one and the same mother: the society of "free exchange".

IV. Bakunin's Anarchism and the Various Anarcho-Communist Hybrid Constructs

Already soon after the appearance of Proudhon's first work about property, all manner of people turned up who seized on the idea of anarchism as it is developed there, as the most extreme consequence of the revolutionary opposition to the existing state of things, and sought to develop it further in one way or another. To these belong, *inter alia*, various German Young Hegelians, like Karl Grün and Moses Hess, although of these the former merely babbled the idea away into belletristic utopianism, while Hess very soon left its realisation to a later future, and endorsed for the present day political and economic reforms that rather belonged to the species of measures that Proudhon later branded as the "System of the Luxembourg". Further, Wilhelm Weitling too shows himself to be influenced by Proudhon in various ways. However, with him, Proudhon's slogans acquire a completely different meaning than with their original author; the declaration of property as theft is stretched to apply to everything traditional, and the opposition to the state is more a revolutionary

protest against the various conventional forms of government than the product of a certain economic-political conception. Rather, Weitling is in all significant points a communist. He insists on the dividing boundary between utopian and modern revolutionary communism and could—if one wishes to bring him into some relation to the anarchist movement on the basis of some of his statements—be described most likely of all as a precursor of so-called anarcho-communism [*anarchistischer Kommunismus*]. Weitling famously also initially defended with great impetuosity the idea of resorting to using the population of penitentiaries and theft in revolutionary struggle against bourgeois society. But with him, this remained a theory, his friends and kindred spirits rejected it, and later he himself also did not come back to it, while the propaganda for specifically Weitlingian communism fell dormant fairly quickly.

The first one who sought to make the idea of anarchism the departure-point for agitation on a grand scale was Bakunin. It appears with him preferentially as a political principle, while Bakunin comments about the economic-social side of the question always only very much in passing. In any case, he can hardly be called a theorist of anarchism. Himself famously a radical Young Hegelian, he knew Stirner personally, likewise Proudhon and also Weitling, and traces of all three can be found in his anarchist publications. But on the other hand they also betray his reading of Marx, whom Bakunin knew since the middle of the 1840s as well, and whose *Communist Manifesto*, written together with Engels, he himself had translated into Russian. So, for example, on page 3 of Bakunin's left-behind fragment on *God and the State*, it already reads almost *verbatim*, following Marx: "Yes, the whole history of humanity, intellectual and moral, political and social, is but a reflection of its economic history."[104] On the whole, however, Bakunin did not really have much use for Marx–Engels' materialist conception of history; his excursions onto the domain of ancient history and philosophy of religion in the cited work do not go a single step beyond what Strauß, Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer said in these areas, but often even rather represent a step backwards compared with them.

Bakunin wants to show that theoretical idealism always of necessity comes down to brutal practical materialism, whereas natural materialism is the foundation of all healthy idealism—an idea that, although it is very open to challenge in the form in which Bakunin posits it, rests on a fundamentally correct idea and is also partly correctly motivated by Bakunin. But Bakunin also wants to prove it historically, and hence exemplifies it on the basis of Greek and Roman civilisation. He asks:

> Which is the most materialistic, the most natural, in its point of departure, and the most humanly ideal in its results? Undoubtedly the Greek civilisation. Which, on the contrary, is the most abstractly ideal in its point of departure,—sacrificing the material liberty of the man to the ideal liberty of the citizen, represented by the abstraction of judicial law, and the natural development of human society to the abstraction of the State,—and which became nevertheless the most brutal in its consequences? The Roman civilisation, certainly.[105]

Of course, the Greek civilisation was like all antique civilisations exclusively national, and had slavery as its foundation. But,

> in spite of these two immense defects, the former none the less conceived and realized the idea of humanity; it ennobled and really idealised the life of men; it transformed human herds into free associations of free men; it created through liberty the sciences, the arts, a poetry, an immortal philosophy, and the primary concepts of human respect. With political and social liberty, it created free thought. …
>
> Human emancipation,—that is the name of the Greek civilisation. And the name of the Roman civilisation? Conquest, with all its brutal consequences. And its last word? The omnipotence of the Caesars. Which means the degradation and enslavement of nations and of men.[106]

This characterisation of Roman and Greek civilisation stems from Hegel, the old master of philosophical idealism. If for him Greek civilisation was the development of the idea of the free and beautiful human being, the Roman that of the idea of right, then that is understandable. But to construct history and bash it into shape according to the same template going on for fifty years after Hegel, only someone could do for whom the materialist conception of history had remained an entirely closed book. Here is not the place to examine in detail the reasons why the Romans remained semi-barbarians for a comparatively long time in relation to the sciences and the arts, after the Greeks had already reached so high a level in both of these, but it is obvious that these causes are not to be found in the "theoretical idealism" of the Romans, but rather that the Romans' distinctive legal system [*Rechtssystem*] and state conception are products of Roman history. Were the Romans for that reason conquerors that they had a fully-constructed law and that state sovereignty stood in uncommonly high esteem with them, or were Roman law and Roman state authority not rather consequences of the Roman conquests? Or, to

pose the question differently, what is the point of departure for Roman and what for Greek civilisation? If the Romans had their Romulus and their Servius Tullius, then the Athenians had their Theseus, their Solon, their Cleisthenes, they had a property law with testamentary freedom and a very highly-developed state constitution, long before they reached that high level of culture in the Periclean Age for which we still admire them today. And if, in practice, they did not reach the state absolutism of the Romans, then precisely their philosophy peaks with Plato and Aristotle in the glorification of it. On the other hand, not Greece but Rome developed the concept of world citizenship and the emancipation of the human as such. It all depends on where in history one draws the line.

Even more arbitrary is the evidence that Bakunin fetches from more recent history for his theory. Here, Italy is supposed to represent materialism and Germany the most abstract, purest, and most transcendental idealism. But Italy could, despite its bourgeoisie, boast a Garibaldi and a Mazzini, while Germany's current heroes are Wilhelm I, Bismarck, and Moltke.[107] Since its formation, Germany appears everywhere as a conqueror, and seeks to extend its own voluntary thraldom [*freiwillige Knechtschaft*] to all its neighbouring peoples; since it has become a unified Reich, it has become a danger to the freedom of all of Europe. Quite apart from the fact that here, just as otherwise in the cited work, Bakunin's pan-Slavist hatred for Germany breaks through to the fore, the weakness of his chosen example is obvious. He abstracts here from all special conditions that contributed to the German unification movement ending in a national war waged under purely dynastic leadership, whereas the Italian unification movement could play out in more revolutionary forms. No doubt, the prevalence of religious or philosophical doctrinairism in a people can under some circumstances become a moment of great political weakness, but in the rule, political weakness and philosophical, or specifically religious idealism are products of one or several deeper-lying factors. They were quite particular historical circumstances under which the Germans became "the most philosophical people in the world". Before these set in, they lacked the innate hue of resolution no less than any other people.

The absolute interpretation that Bakunin gives his statement quoted above about the consequences of the materialist and idealist ways of thinking, and the formulaic way in which he applies it to history, is at the same time typical for his anarchism in general. An absolute contrast is constructed and applied to the various phenomena and institutions of societal life, of such a kind that everything that does not fit into the category he

has declared to be just of the natural, resting on a materialist foundation, is abruptly rejected. But now, it is well-known that all the work of human hands is at the same time the work of their minds; that every human action is mediated through the brain, and that there is no institution that would be purely materialist. Consequently, only the unconsciously-working law of nature would hence be fundamentally good, and to it then Bakunin in fact also ascribes unconditional authority. And he restricts this authority not to the natural laws of the physical world, but extends them also to the laws of the *social* world.

> What is authority? Is it the inevitable power of the natural laws which manifest themselves in the necessary concatenation and succession of phenomena in the physical and social worlds? Indeed, against these laws revolt is not only forbidden [Ed. B.—!],—it is even impossible …
>
> *Yes, we are absolutely the slaves of these laws …*
>
> The great misfortune is that a large number of natural laws, already established as such by science, remain unknown to the popular masses, thanks to the watchfulness of these tutelary governments that exist, as we know, only for the good of the people.
>
> There is another grave difficulty,—namely, that the major portion of the natural laws connected with the development of human society, which are quite as necessary and invariable as the laws that govern the physical world, have not been duly established and recognised by science itself. Once they shall have been recognised by science, and then from science, by means of an extensive system of popular education and instruction, shall have passed into the consciousness of all, the question of liberty will be entirely solved. The stubbornest authorities must admit that then there will be no need either of political organisation or direction or legislation, three things which, whether they emanate from the will of the sovereign or from the vote of a parliament elected by universal suffrage, and even should they conform to the system of natural laws,—which has never been the case and never will be the case,—are always equally fatal and hostile to the liberty of the masses from the very fact that they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws.
>
> The liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognised them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual.[108]

After all of that, it would be the highest wisdom, the redemption of mankind would consist in recognising the laws of our physical and social

existence and slavishly *subjecting* ourselves to their *authority*. Anyone can hold that to be a goal worth aspiring to if they like, hitherto civilised humanity has only taken it in its head to *command* the laws of their existence as far as possible, to *regulate* them. That is already possible to a certain degree with the laws of the physical world surrounding us, but to a still far higher degree with the laws of societal life. Only that individual effort is not enough for this, but that for that is required the strength of organised *society*. The mere *recognition* of the laws of social life, which Bakunin demands, would be downright worthless if it led to the unconditional subjection to these laws, since so long as they are "natural laws", they will still assert themselves without our doing so. But even the advance of recognising these "natural laws" depends on the degree to which humans *master* the nature they have recognised—their societal relations.

We do not want to engage in any literary dressage [*Buchstabenreiterei*], but concede that Bakunin will have *presupposed* this gradual mastery as the self-evident conclusion of the relevant advances in the recognition of the laws of social life. But this is by no means the case under all circumstances. To this belongs respectively a very strong *interest* that is very capable of guidance, and where this interest is not present or is neutralised by other interests, stagnations or even regressions in one direction or another are unavoidable. However, irrespective of what Bakunin imagined, what he has proclaimed is the *absolute authority*, *the unconditional validity of the natural laws of the physical and social world*.

And that is only logical too. Either—to stay with the social world—humans regulate their conditions themselves, or they become slaves to these conditions. This contrast is not yet present at the first stages of societal development. Original communism does not have it at all, here humans are absolute slaves of the physical world around them, but within the bosom of every individual society there reigns complete order. With the dissolution of the original social units [*Verbände*], this natural order ceases, but still conditions remain easy to oversee in light of the simplicity of production and undeveloped intercourse. By contrast, the more intercourse among humans and peoples increases, the more production becomes specialised, and the more complex and potent productive tools become, the more natural forces are placed in the service of production and intercourse, the more intricately-entangled societal relations become. Production and intercourse develop their own laws, and these laws from now on affect the mass of people with the same compulsive force as the law of nature on savages. So long as they exist, the individual must subject

themselves to them, if they do not want to perish. Every bourgeois grasps this, indeed the recognition of the "natural laws of the social world" and the obedient subjection to the same is *the pinnacle of all bourgeois wisdom*, *the gospel of the bourgeois economists*. "One must", Bakunin writes at another point in relation to these "laws of nature",

> be at bottom either a theologian or at least a metaphysician, jurist, or *bourgeois* economist to rebel against the law by which twice two make four.[109]

That is a great error, precisely for the bourgeois economist the "societal laws of nature" are as fixed as "twice two make four". And there is no bourgeois economist who will not agree with Bakunin on the additional statement: "But these revolts"—namely against the laws of nature—

> or, rather, these attempts at or foolish fancies of an impossible revolt, are decidedly the exception; for, in general, it may be said that the mass of men, in their daily lives, acknowledge the government of common sense—that is, of the sum of the natural laws generally recognised—in an almost absolute fashion.[110]

Let all do and act as they please, the world will take its course by itself!—

In this too, the bourgeois economist has little to object to in Bakunin, when he says: In the face of the laws of nature, the human being only has one possible freedom: to recognise them and, in accordance with the goal of collective and individual emancipation or humanisation, which they pursue, to apply them more and more—since that means nothing other than that these endeavours have to move within the boundaries of these "immutable" natural laws. That these laws themselves *change* along with society, that humans thus have to become ever more the *masters* of their societal relations—of that, there is nary a word.

And how would such a word have even fitted into that system—into the absolute condemnation of the state, regardless of how it is constituted, into the rejection of all legislation, regardless from whom it proceeds and of what kind it is. The theory that the state could only ever benefit those classes whose tools it once was earlier, that legislation could only ever be of use to the "dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them", dissolves into nothing if one does not cling firmly to the idea that however society is composed, its natural laws are still always and forever the same, and rule with the same

absolute force.[111] But does "twice two" still always and under all circumstances "make four"? Certainly, yet through advances in mechanics one has figured out how to achieve an effect through expedient ordering of units of "twice two", which goes far beyond the units with their individual effects of "four". Bakunin's entire work is full of anathemas against the pretension of learned scholars to sacrifice human beings to the abstractions of science, but

> *These people never smell the old rat,*
> *E'en when he has them by the collar.*[112]

A theory that says to the proletarians: because the state and legislation hitherto was only used by your exploiters for their own purposes, you may not make use of it, since however you set about it, you will always only benefit your exploiters and harm yourselves—such a theory is itself the crassest abstraction from all reality, all actual life in society. And again we come up against an insoluble contradiction: above, it was said that all intellectual and moral, political and social history of humanity is merely a reflection of its economic history. The state is a historical phenomenon—so it is as a social and political institution only a reflection of economic conditions; to wish to *abolish* the state, so long as the economic conditions continue to exist whose reflection it is, the attack on the state *qua* state, is hence fundamentally wrong according to Bakunin's own argument. And if one wanted to interject that the state is still simply a tool of class rule and so had to be smashed to pieces, if an end is to be put to class rule, then this is to be answered by saying that class rule cannot be eradicated without the preceding rule of the class of the proletariat, and that the measures to remove the economic foundations of class rule are partly statist in nature, so that the workers hence must first and foremost strive to make state power amenable to their purposes.

Judging by Bakunin's comments in incidental essays [*Gelegenheitsaufsätze*], after the disintegration of the state, "*natural solidarity*" shall supply the cement of the societal edifice of the future that is to be erected, and all communist anarchists parrot it after him. Now *prima facie* there are two kinds of solidarity: a solidarity in *doings* [*Dinge*] and the so-called *feeling* of solidarity [*Solidaritätsgefühl*]. These can coincide, i.e., the solidarity in doings can be recognised by people, and this recognition can become as a feeling of solidarity, or rather consciousness of solidarity, a mighty driving motivation for societal progress. But on a large scale,

consciousness of solidarity only works strongly enough to prompt voluntary relinquishment of individual interests under a certain *pressure*. A dissolution of the group association, which, however deficiently, still today for better or worse functions as the organ of the great interests of society, without *previously* creating institutions that make such an association unnecessary, could by contrast only have the effect of *intensifying* the *contradiction* between individual interest and societal solidarity. This contradiction today is already large enough, despite all better insight, to oppose societal progress in a thousand different points, and how much more would this be the case if society consisted of nothing but a multitude of groups and individuals competitively busying themselves side-by-side. First raising the contradiction of interests to a heightened potential, and then expecting from the insight of humans and the compulsion of natural laws what ultimately would still be nothing other than a modification of the institutions that had previously been smashed to pieces, means leaving the safe route towards the goal in order to strike out on a different one, which possibly also leads towards the goal, but only by great detours, which cost time and cause unspeakably many troubles.

That applies not only to Bakunin's anarchism, it applies to all the different subtypes and variants of anarchism, in which free communist society forms the desired end goal. It is always the same tendency of going round the houses, it is the same internal contradictions, the same abstractions that we meet. Now the emphasis is laid more on the local associations, the municipalities, now on the economic associations that "freely" form for certain purposes, the so-called "free groups". Groups or municipalities, or rather groups *and* municipalities only enter into association with one another so far as need and insight occasion them to do so, otherwise they are absolutely sovereign—autonomous—just as individuals are themselves. With conditions of this kind, in order to make imaginable a further development of society along the lines of the greater welfare and greater well-being of all, as well as elevated culture, an almost angelic perfection is ascribed to human beings, and to natural laws a panacean force that puts the most famous universal remedies in the shade—the world is perfect wherever the *state* does not manage to force its way in with its tortures.

"Church and State are my two *bêtes noires*", it says another time in Bakunin, and the state must well be this even more than the Church, since Bakunin overcomes his dread before the latter at least so far that he manages, as hard as he claims that this is for him, at the relevant point to speak

of "our [Ed. B.—the anarchists'] own church".[113] But shuddering with fear before an institution is almost always proof that one has only deficiently recognised its nature. Behind the exaggerated fear of the state lies the same superstition as behind the exaggerated cult of it.

We said above that the state of affairs expected by the anarchists would also only present itself, if it is achieved, as a *modification* of the institutions that are programmatically to be smashed to bits by them beforehand. The proofs for this jump out at us at first glance in almost every anarchist treatise that we take in our hand. Here we have a veritable embarrassment of riches as soon as we want to go about citing them. As anti-authoritarian as the anarchist may comport themselves, for them there is always a point where the groups, municipalities, associations appeal to "society". Now, the word society sounds harmless enough, one can imagine by it the most innocent thing conceivable—the pure concept of a multitude of individuals living alongside one another uncoercedly—but in reality a society that is supposed to intervene, take care of certain needs, regulate certain misuses, needs organs, a constitution, financial means, and potentially means of compulsion. Here it is only a matter of a *more* or a *less*—the more "communist" the anarchist, the stronger the *more*, so that their "society" all of a sudden becomes a *state*, as *they* define it; but also the anti-communist anarchist, who does not absolutely represent the brutal standpoint of the right of the stronger, at some point, as soon as they try to outline their future society, undergoes their Damascene conversion, where society must intervene in the sphere of the sovereignty of the free groups. With Proudhon we saw how, right in the middle of the loveliest mutualism, state and legislation were resorted to directly. Bakunin—we keep only to the works that appeared under his name, not the anonymous articles in the *Volksgericht*—did not go into the details of his anarchist society, but Kropotkin, whom in the question of anarchist doctrine one can describe as his successor, and who today is acknowledged by the great majority of anarchists as the most scientific representative of anarchism, demands that in anarchist society everyone is awarded vital provisions according to their need: whatever is present in excess, of that everyone should "take from the pile", but what can only be produced in a limited scope should, taking in the first instance the old and children into consideration, and the weak in general, should be disbursed in *rations*, measured according to need.[114] How that is to be brought about, Kropotkin of course does not say, but that there is more to this than some mystical incorporeal "society" is entirely obvious.

On this hurdle, all communist systems of anarchism founder. The prevaricating cop-outs by means of which their various fathers try to cover up this fact us recognise the shipwreck all the more clearly.

In this way, Kropotkin—and after him Reclus and others—helps himself by pointing to the great accomplishments that many free associations are already carrying out for common purposes—the Society of the Red Cross, the Lifeboat Institutions in England and elsewhere, the hospital fraternities, etc.—and how many great things are achieved by way of free covenants, without the state or legislative institutions having any role in the matter—hence how much greater the things that would be accomplished if only the more noble moral qualities that humanity has developed over its long history could develop free from any state authority, free of any statist compulsion. Everyone by themselves would feel the need in some way or other to carry out useful activity for society, and just as the librarian of the British Museum does not ask the reader what his services earlier rendered to society were, just as the crew of a lifeboat does not first reassure themselves whether the people on a ship that finds itself in need have won a right to their help, so too would anarchist society fearlessly be able to allow every individual freely to choose from out of the common stock of society the satisfaction of their needs at their discretion.[115]

Whoever knows the real state of things even only to some degree, to them the deceptive conclusions of this reasoning are as clear as day. To start with, by far not all the enumerated associations are "free" in the sense that the state does not lend them notable assistance through financial aid, guaranteeing privileges, legal protection, etc., and only then makes possible their existence. Next, many of their accomplishments, as worthy of recognition as they may be in themselves, are absolutely inadequate for the envisaged purpose. London has innumerable free hospitals [*freiwillige Krankenhäuser*], which partly have at their disposal very great endowed funds, saved up over centuries, and collections are taken for them in all kinds of ways, on certain days at every street corner, and everyone acknowledges their benevolent purpose; and yet they cannot solve the task that falls to them, and still despite knowing this their municipalisation is now sought by all the progressive elements of London; yet the city of five million is really not a "free group". Thirdly, most of these charitable [*gemeinnützig*] associations are designed for certain quite exceptional needs and emergencies, etc., or for ideological purposes—but what is at issue here is the question of the procurement and distribution of objects for everyday need, of the most prosaic articles of daily life. Whatever great things the

English Bible Society accomplishes in the name of supplying humanity with holy sustenance—to conclude from this that the humans of the future, like the birds in the sky, must be unconcerned about their terrestrial fare is somewhat rather too audacious a conclusion. It misses its mark all the more since, as remarked earlier, the nearest effect of the immediate disintegration of the state and all state organs would be that the drive for individual self-preservation would assert itself even more strongly than it does anyway already in today's society. The strengthening of egoism is, however, equivalent to a weakening of the existing altruistic drive. The egoism of municipal groups [*Gruppengemeinden*], etc., would suffocate the most broadminded public spirit [*Gemeinsinn*].

As regards their social doctrine, the inner dualism of communist or communisant systems of anarchism presents itself in such a way that they dictate the economic liquidation of society, and from this economic dissolution the highest, hitherto unattained ethical regeneration of humanity is supposed to proceed, which then would again reverse this dissolution and only then construct the true community. "Nothing from the top down, everything from the bottom up", it reads in the anarchist catechism—but here, history should suddenly make itself from the top down—from the airy domain of ethics shall the bridge be built to economics, and not the latter, but the former figure as the foundation of the societal edifice. Let nobody be concerned that with such construction engineering, things could turn out somewhat wobbly. Even if the walls are leaning apart and the beams come out skewed—the "nature of things", the "compulsion of conditions" will soon bring everything back again into its right equilibrium, the anarchist assures us. Whereupon we wish anybody who believes this the very best of luck.

"Individual liberty!", it reads in Kropotkin's work *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*—

> "Take pebbles", said Fourier, "put them into a box and shake them, and they will arrange themselves in a mosaic that you could never get by entrusting to anyone the work of arranging them harmoniously."[116]

Fourier was an imaginative man, and often there is very much that is right in his comparisons—but they must be applied with intelligence. Human beings are not pebbles, and to be shaken so long by a higher power until everyone falls into their fitting situation is everything but an ideal of individual freedom.

It would be absurd to wish to claim that the ethical conceptions of civilised humans, which have been acquired over the course of thousands of years of development, are worthless or even only insignificant for societal progress. It would be no less absurd to delude oneself that societal relations allow themselves to be satisfactorily regulated down to the smallest detail from one centre or a few centrales. No adherent of modern socialism who is even somewhat of sound mind harbours ideas of such a clownish kind about the communist society to be striven for. The doom-mongering about the communism of the barracks [*Kasernenkommunismus*] with narrow-minded templates and banal rulery [*Allerweltsregiererei*] are debonair inventions of the anarchists, or trashy rumour-peddlery of fairy-tales dished up by bourgeois critique. Starting with Proudhon, we find in no anarchist a properly appropriate critique of modern socialism, an attempt that encourages discussion and analyses of its fundamental concepts. Everywhere there is the same manner of proceeding, of insinuating downright rubbish about one's opponents, to let the sublime excellence of one's own recipe appear in all the better a light.[117] A factual enquiry into the works of the acknowledged theorists of modern socialism would in fact only reveal that these, less "authoritarian" than all the anarchists from the extreme right through to the extreme left, offer no instructions to future humanity about how it has to regulate its common affairs, that they do not confront it with a penal codex: *verboten*, to go any other way than that sketched out by us; *verboten*, to make use of these or other institutions, even for a single day; *verboten*, to reach for the heights of your needs and possibilities, instead of strictly adhering to the legal and moral concepts condoned by us. About all of this one finds not a word in the writings of Marx and Engels—but all the more in the writings of the theorists of anarchism.

It sounds very "freedomly [*freiheitlich*]" when they say again and again: nothing from the top down, everything from the bottom up, nothing from the centre to the periphery, everything from the periphery to the centre, no centralisation, federalism everywhere, no general representative bodies, only specialised agreement committees [*Vereinbarungskomiteen*]—but in reality this is the highest authoritarianism—to transfer an idea drawn from the struggle of the bourgeois and the working class against bureaucratic state absolutism onto the entirety of societal affairs—the method of Dr. Eisenbart, but in a form that could hardly be any less in agreement with the scientific examination of the societal body and its needs.

Modern society, as we *prima facie* have it handed down to us and have to develop it further, is far too complex an organism to let itself be readily reshaped according to an arbitrary template without endangering the welfare of its members—regardless of whether this is a matter of the "state" template, or that of some "freedom", centralisation, or federalisation. Absolute centralism would be, if it is feasible at all, economically and socially equally pernicious, but society would be suicidal if, with all its existing centralised institutions, instead of reorganising them appropriately according to its needs, it wanted to summarily clear them away and expect their replacement from chance coincidence or the compulsion of conditions. It will only remove what is truly dispensable, whose functions can better be carried out elsewhere. This it will do with the state, the same with several individual administrative organs, it will perhaps for a time strengthen some, then very soon let others shrivel, and call yet others into existence for the first time. In this, we presume, it will proceed according to certain fundamental political and social principles—nothing lies further from our minds than to make the case for unfounded eclecticism—but in its application, it will let common sense and experience have a role to play.

That the anarchists simply will not get into their heads. Freedom, unleashing individual forces, is the *arcanum* that is supposed to cure everything, remove all evil, and bring everything good by itself. But this is neither the case in nature, which all anarchists like to point to so much, nor has history shown that the way to progress is only freedom and nothing but freedom. In nature, a vicious struggle for existence reigns, destruction of billions of seeds and millions of individuals that are otherwise capable of life. But in the history of peoples, progress, the enabling of greater freedom and greater well-being, has often taken place initially through the restriction of certain freedoms—the destruction of feudal freedoms, and the constitution of the absolute state represents an important milestone on the way towards the emancipation of the human race. There is no formula that is fitting for all situations, according to which this emancipation happens—depending on circumstances, one principle or another will step more into the foreground. What was the loftiest condition for the full unfolding of bourgeois society can conceivably recede into the second or third tier for the development of the communist society aspired to by the working class. The working class, awakened to consciousness of itself, and determined to reshape society according to its needs, will

not be so foolhardy as to do this in such a way that it forges chains for itself in doing so—but no more will it let itself be sworn to a principle, a universal remedy, that in fact is nothing other than the mere exaggeration of the doctrine of untrammelled economic competitive struggle, derived from the needs of the bourgeois classes.

We want to break off here. In the original plan for this work, the intention was to go into all the better-known varieties of anarchism and show how they all amount to shaping the proletarian movement according to bourgeois concepts—and themselves to model whimsical quirks and salvage for future society as great a store as possible of bourgeois institutions—partly out of conscious infatuation with these institutions, as with Proudhon and his successors, partly out of ambiguous taking-over of bourgeois slogans—out of the inclination to give relative truths an absolute interpretation. Considerations for other works, however, force the author to let matters rest with the summary passages above. Also, an all-too detailed critique would perhaps not have fitted into the framework of this periodical. For this reason, I have left out a few further examples, by which the deceptive conclusions of anarchist economics in particular become strikingly manifest. Yet I hope that I have sufficiently brought out the moments that are to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the fundamental economic principles of anarchism. In the last instance, all anarchist systems demand fearfully strong *faith*. With them, one must be satisfied with the hope that the free economy of free groups will regulate everything for the best. To the question: and what if it does not? its exponents remain silent or answer with prevarications. They also cannot do any different, after they have *forbidden* society from interfering in the economic domain of the free groups or municipalities.

In this entire treatise, the social doctrine of anarchism was examined only as to its *economic* content—only right at the end was also the *ethical* side of it touched on. But this belongs to this topic, and should originally have also been considered in these articles. Letting matters rest with these comments in passing about it would already seem even less justified because certain currents today, which here and there are even propagated in the workers' movement, either derive from it directly or are closely associated with it. Here one should recall, *inter alia*, only the so-called Nietzscheanism. But the topic is interesting enough to merit a separate treatment, and for that reason we break off here with the plea to see the sketch above as only dedicated to the economic side of the question.

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—The series of articles begun under the above title in issue 12 of volume 10 of the *Neue Zeit* suffered an interruption already after the second article, because a nervous ailment prevented me from undertaking any authorial activity for some time. When I resumed it to its full extent, the dynamite attacks in Paris were at that time preoccupying the daily press, and the moment hence did not seem suitable to me to continue my analysis. Later, I started to doubt whether there was even any interest in it among the readers of *Neue Zeit* anymore. Yet after several letters convinced me otherwise, I do not want to tarry any longer in completing the discussion I have begun.

   For new readers, I will add the remark that the starting-point for these articles is the work by Herr John Henry Mackay: *The Anarchists: A Picture of Civilisation at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, which appeared last year. The first article was concerned with the content of Mackay's book in general, the second characterised Stirner's oft-cited treatise *The Ego and Its Own*, first published in 1848, which presents the most radical form of what the literature that centres on the individual has brought out in this century.]
2. John Henry Mackay, *The Anarchists: A Picture of Civilisation at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, George Schumm (tr.) (Boston, MA: Benj. R. Tucker, Publisher, 1891). John Henry Mackay (1864–1933), Scottish-German author and individualist anarchist thinker, hagiographer of Max Stirner, advocate for pederastic emancipation.
3. Ibid., pp. 291, 294.
4. Ibid., p. 60.
5. Ibid., p. 64.
6. Ibid., p. 106.
7. Ibid., p. 236.
8. §§32–3 *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich vom 15. Mai 1871*: Notwehr; Überschreitung der Notwehr.
9. Mackay, *The Anarchists*, p. 15.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 149.
12. Ibid., p. 270.
13. Ibid., p. 210.
14. Ibid., p. 154.
15. Ibid., p. ix.
16. Ibid., pp. vii–viii.
17. Benjamin Ricketson Tucker (1851–1939), American journalist and anarchist thinker, editor of the periodical *Liberty* (1881–1908), initially a libertarian socialist with Ricardian and Proudhonian influences, later a convert to individualist anarchism inspired by Thomas Jefferson and

Max Stirner, strongly opposed to bureaucratic trade unionism and legal monopolies over money, land, tariffs, and patents.

18. Mackay, *The Anarchists*, p. ix.
19. [Ed. B.—True to his theory, Stirner capitalises the first-person pronoun everywhere.] Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, David Leopold (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 143.
20. Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, pp. 145–6.
21. Ibid., p. 148.
22. Ibid., pp. 165–6.
23. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Création de l'Ordre dans l'Humanité, ou Principes d'Organisation Politique* (Paris: A. Lacroix et Cie, 1873), §435; Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, p. 111.
24. Ibid., p. 223.
25. [Ed. B.—Stirner already uses the word *Fremdentum* [foreignness] in contrast to *Eigentum* [ownness].] Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, p. 279.
26. Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, p. 279.
27. Ibid., p. 222.
28. Ibid., p. 211.
29. Ibid., p. 196.
30. Ibid., pp. 271–2.
31. Ibid., p. 272.
32. Ibid., pp. 99–100.
33. Ibid., p. 7.
34. Ibid., p. 319.
35. Ibid., p. 324.
36. Ibid., pp. 257–8.
37. Ibid., p. 191.
38. [Ed. B.—*Studies on Proudhon*, p. 164.]
39. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?* (Paris: Garnier Frères, Libraires, 1849), p. 250.
40. [Ed. B.—Cf. Jules Panin, *Les origins du Socialisme Contemporain.*]
41. Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?*, p. 116.
42. [Ed. B.—"He (Proudhon) wants to criticise all kinds of property, but actually offers only a critique of private property in land, as he himself says in his *Majorats littéraires*, which came out in 1862: 22 years ago I formulated a critique of landed property." (Diehl, *P. J. Proudhon*, first section: The Theory of Property and Value, p. 34)]
43. Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?*, p. 137.
44. Ibid., pp. 142–3.
45. Ibid., p. 242.
46. Ibid., p. 244.
47. Ibid., p. 246.
48. Ibid., p. 247.
49. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Théorie de la Propriété* (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, & Co., 1866), p. 246.

50. Ibid., p. 15.
51. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église, vol. 1* (Paris: Librairie de Garnier Frères, 1858), p. 353.
52. Proudhon, *Théorie de la Propriété*, p. 135.
53. Ibid., pp. 136–8.
54. Ibid., p. 142.
55. Ibid., p. 144.
56. Ibid., p. 167.
57. Ibid., p. 176.
58. Ibid., p. 181.
59. [Editors of *Neue Zeit*—After the February 1848 Revolution, a workers' commission was instituted by the provisional government, so that the massing workers would calm themselves and believe that something was being done for them. *L. Blanc* had himself placed at the head of this commission, which took up its seat in a palais, the *Luxembourg*. Hence the expression to which Proudhon helped himself to describe "authoritarian" socialism.]
60. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières* (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, & Co., 1868), p. 57.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 59.
63. Ibid., p. 61.
64. Ibid.
65. [Ed. B.—A. Mühlberger, *Studies on Proudhon*, p. 62.]
66. Georg Jellinek, 'Constitutional Amendment and Constitutional Transformation', Belinda Cooper (tr.), in Arthur Jacobson and Bernhard Schlink (eds.), *Weimar—A Jurisprudence of Crisis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 56.
67. Proudhon, *Capacité Politique*, p. 64.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., p. 68.
70. Ibid., pp. 69–70.
71. Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch, *Kapitel zu einem deutschen Arbeiterkatechismus* (Leipzig: Ernst Keil, 1863).
72. Mackay, *The Anarchists*, p. 109.
73. Proudhon, *Capacité Politique*, pp. 83–4.
74. Ibid., p. 95.
75. Ibid., p. 96.
76. Ibid., p. 97.
77. Ibid., p. 96.
78. Ibid., p. 101.
79. Ibid., p. 102.
80. Ibid., p. 105.
81. Ibid., pp. 109–11.
82. Ibid., p. 128.

83. Ibid., p. 126.
84. [Ed. B.—Here to be understood in a technical sense.]
85. Proudhon, *Capacité Politique*, pp. 130–1.
86. Ibid., pp. 132–3.
87. Ibid., p. 133.
88. Ibid., p. 134.
89. Ibid., pp. 134–5.
90. Ibid., pp. 135–6.
91. Ibid., p. 136.
92. Ibid., pp. 136–9.
93. Ibid., p. 139.
94. Ibid., p. 141.
95. Ibid., p. 142.
96. [Ed. B.—Logically, Proudhon then also writes at one point, "love is only perfect to the extent that it has taken as its motto the maxims of mutualism—I would almost have said of commerce: I give if you give." *On the Capacity*, p. 165.]
97. [Ed. B.—cf. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., p. 154.]
98. Proudhon, *Capacité Politique*, p. 335.
99. Ibid., pp. 337–8.
100. Ibid., p. 343.
101. Ibid., p. 346.
102. Mackay, *The Anarchists*, pp. 94, 109–10.
103. Proudhon, *Capacité Politique*, p. 323.
104. [Ed. B.—Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State*. Geneva 1882. We are citing this original edition, since we do not have the later German translation to hand.] Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State*, Benjamin R. Tucker (tr.) (New York, NY: Benj. R. Tucker, Publisher, 1895 [1882]) p. 6.
105. Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 27.
106. [Ed. B.—On p. 29 of the same work of Bakunin's it reads: "It is the characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the mind and heart of men. The privileged man, whether politically or economically, is a man depraved in mind and heart. That is a social law which admits of no exception, and is as applicable to entire nations as to classes, corporations, and individuals. It is the law of equality, the supreme condition of liberty and humanity. The principal object of this treatise is precisely to demonstrate this truth in all the manifestations of human life." If the Greeks, even though their civilisation rested on slavery, could accomplish everything listed above, then something must be awry with the *absolute* validity of this truth. In fact, to the cultivation of sciences at a certain stage of civilisation belongs a privileged existence, independent of care for the procurement of daily keep.] Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 27.
107. Giuseppe Maria Garibaldi (1807–1882), Italian guerrilla general, republican politician, and nationalist activist, and Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872),

Italian journalist, republican revolutionary, and advocate for women's rights, together along with Camillo Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont-Sardinia seen as the leading figures of the *Risorgimento*. Wilhelm I (1797–1888), King of Prussia (1861–1888) and first Kaiser of a united German *Reich* (1871–1888). Helmuth Karl Bernhard von Moltke (1800–1891), Prussian field marshal, played a crucial role in the military victories during the wars of German unification (1864–1871).

108. [Ed. B.—The publishers of this fragment—Herr Elisée Reclus and the now likewise deceased C. Cafiero—add the following note to this passage: "Bakunin doubtless here wants to speak of "economic laws" and "social science", which in fact only finds itself in its early stages so far.] Bakunin, *God and the State*, pp. 17–18.
109. Ibid., p. 18.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., pp. 21–2.
112. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Auerbach's Cellar in Leipzig".
113. Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 21.
114. [Ed. B.—cf. *Anarchy in Socialist Evolution*, Paris 1887, p. 13, and the essay "The coming anarchy" in the collected volume published under A. R. Parson's name: *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Foundation*. Chicago 1887, p. 130.]
115. [Ed. B.—cf. essay "The coming anarchy" in the aforementioned collected volume, pp. 129–42.]
116. Peter Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*, Henry Glasse (tr.) (London: William Reeves, 1886 [1884]), p. 12.
117. [Ed. B.—Whereby all the same it must be remarked that the anarchist often does not treat their brother anarchists who differ from them much better. "You want free love, like myself", the individualist anarchist Auban in Mackay says to the communist anarchist Trupp in their discussion about the advantages of their systems. "But what do you understand by free love? That it is the duty of every woman to yield to the desire of every man, and that no man has the right to withdraw himself from the desire of any woman", etc., and Auban "shudders" at the thought that this idea could ever become dominant. (Mackay, *The Anarchists*, p. 140) He could have saved himself the goosebumps. With no anarchist, however communist they may be, and no more with any "authoritarian" communist have we come across this ghastly idiotic interpretation of the concept of free love. Something like that only Master Proudhon could concoct in hallowed union with the muckraking papers of the bourgeoisie, in order to present the "System of the Luxembourg" to the outraged philistine as the pinnacle of all abomination.]

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CHAPTER 13

Social Liberalism or Collectivism

Just as the literature of socialism has an overabundance of systems or designs for a new societal order, so too it boasts a not insubstantial wealth of names for such systems. In particular, the particle *social* has been furnished with all manner of possible epithets, and has been reframed in every possible guise, in order to satisfy the need for comprehensive descriptions of certain systems or for features that differentiate certain schools of thought of a socialist, and as the case may be also of a non-socialist character—from the shareholder beneficiary [*sozietär*] system of the Fourierists to the sociality-based [*sozialitär*] one of Dühring, from the social conservatism of the defunct Wagener faction to the specific social revolutionism of the Blanquists.[1] The rise of the concept *social-liberal* is also to be traced back to the same need. It is comparatively young in age in Germany, but it has, like *socialisme libertaire* in France, still already undergone its own vagaries of fate there too. As far as I know, it was first applied by Th. Hertzka for his theory of society, then later it was selected by Dr. H. Jastrow as the description for his aspired-to political party or tendency, which was supposed to unify a radical bourgeois liberalism with socialist reformist policy, and just recently, an economic policymaker [*Wirtschaftspolitiker*], Dr. Franz Oppenheimer, who is influenced by Hertzka but is forging his own path, has used the concept in yet another new context, according to which it is meant to, or able to, describe a direction within Social Democracy, and social liberalism expanded in this way he has attributed to the author of this work.[2]

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That happened in an article: 'Bernstein–Kautsky', which appeared in issue 5 of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 1899 volume. A counter-article by Dr. L. Gumplowicz: 'Socialism or Collectivism?', published in issue 1 of the same periodical, 1900 volume, gave the occasion for me to write the following article, which was printed in issue 3 [*M.O. — actually issue 4*] of the same volume, and which the publishing-house of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* wishes to publish in a special printing. I make no pretence that this causal piece of work, which cleaves to the line of thought of the aforementioned essays, partly as a report, and partly as a polemic, has any claim to count as an orienting piece of writing about the stated topic. If I nonetheless agreed to the special printing taking place, then I had my mind made up by the circumstance that at the moment I lack the time to address the object more systematically, but that the side of it that is discussed here holds a special interest at the current time. I hence ask that the essay be merely regarded as a contribution to a topic to which I would gladly have dedicated a more systematic examination—if one likes, as an advance instalment on such an analysis, which by rights is my responsibility. I have tried to bestow on it greater lucidity through a somewhat different internal division, and through an *addendum* at the end at least to some degree to meet the need for summary reflection. Some passages of the original essay that are irrelevant to the matter itself, on the other hand, have been left out, and here and there I have carried out stylistic and small factual corrections and supplements.

London, April 1900.

Ed. Bernstein.

* * *

When my work about the *Preconditions of Socialism* came out, Dr. Franz Oppenheimer believed that he was justified in greeting me as his special kindred spirit. This was immediately seized on by others and deployed against me in a deeply disloyal way. The latter fact, and the circumstance that Oppenheimer was also challenged on points in which he is correct in my view, prompted me at the time to ignore the insinuations in question and postpone my disagreement with Oppenheimer. There are situations where it seems to us ignoble to reply to a somewhat compromising greeting with a renunciation.

But now where Dr. Gumplowicz is so kind as to ready his lance for my faithful old English heart, and to call out to Oppenheimer: "Lady, your

charms are wasted on him", the moment has come for me to comment on this matter myself.

I. Posing the Question

In his essay: 'Kautsky–Bernstein', Dr. Oppenheimer has defined collectivism as a "socialist economic society with strictly centralised leadership on the basis of common ownership of producer goods". Gumplowicz rejects this coupling of the concept of collectivism with the idea of "strictly centralised leadership" as thoroughly arbitrary and confusing. In this I can only agree with him. Of course, Oppenheimer is not the originator of this combination, it can already be found in other authors. But it is to be challenged all the more. It conforms neither to the historical emergence of the word collectivism—it was first used as the description of a societal system by the opponents of the supposedly strictly centralist General Council of the International, as a securing of the federal principle of administration—nor does it follow from the concept of collectivity. Collectivism is an intermediary concept between the concept of communism, which is associated with all manner of notions of a sectarian or utopian character, and the concept of socialism, which today is very far-ranging. It is free of the sectarian associations of the former, and expresses more strongly than the latter the principle of the social economy [*Gemeinwirtschaft*]. But it is tied to no formal principles of administration, and is precisely for that reason a very serviceable concept. For today and in the foreseeable future we have to do with a plethora of organisations and institutions which neither the concept of communism nor that of socialism covers, but which are social-economic [*gemeinwirtschaftlich*] in nature. Oppenheimer's proposal to use the word associalism [*Assozialismus*] to denote the cooperative form of production in socialist society I consider entirely flawed. This unfortunate child of Schäffle we will leave to the anti-collectivist skulls of the peasantry.[3]

And now to the matter itself.

Gumplowicz poses the question: Assuming that it is correct, what value does the proof offered by Oppenheimer in his book *Large Landownership and the Social Question* that, before the absorption of land and landed property by feudal large-scale landownership in Germany, the situation of the working classes was developing in an upwards direction, but with it and through it proletarianisation and as a further consequence exploitative capitalism set in—what value does this proof have for evaluating the

problems before which the conditions that have taken shape since then place us?[4] Is it to be assumed that with the mere eradication of this disruptive factor would also disappear again all the evil effects that were brought about by it?

If Oppenheimer had claimed nothing more than that, the answer would be fairly easy. Comparisons are always somewhat skewed, and even the example of the surgeon, which Gumplowicz presents, has its weak sides. But it can still serve as an illustration here: By pulling the knife out of the injured person's wound, the doctor is in fact fulfilling only one condition of healing, and it comes very much down to the circumstances, what means this otherwise also requires. In this way—and this precisely our case likewise illustrates—the civilised person will require much more careful care than a savage [*Naturmensch*]. The human being bred overwhelmingly by natural selection, and that is after all the human in nature, overcomes wounds much more quickly than the civilised human. With them, the "self-healing process" is a fairly simple matter. The civilised human, who through development over thousands of years and their entire living conditions is to a high degree removed from selection through natural breeding, is for all that subject to all possible manner of complications. They need a different kind of treatment. In the same way, a remedy that might perhaps have been sufficient at an earlier stage to bring about general well-being cannot possibly suffice for our modern society with its completely changed conditions of intercourse and aggregation, attitudes to life and life aspirations.

But now that, I think, is not what Oppenheimer means either. As I understand him, he sees in feudal and semi-feudal major landownership and the legal institutions conforming to it—"nomadic right [*Nomadenrecht*]"—firstly a cause of the rise and the expansion of the oppressive and exploitative dominion of capital, and secondly a hurdle to overcoming it, not this overcoming itself. To the degree that the former is done away with, this overcoming is eased and simplified. There would then no longer be needed many of the artistic devices that are today regarded by Social Democracy as indispensable, but whose feasibility and usefulness seem very problematic to him. Just as modern medicine, to remain with the image above, has turned away from strong concoctions and bloodletting, and seeks to regain through educational hygiene for the body the resilience that was once the product of natural breeding, but against certain illnesses uses serum therapy, so too Oppenheimer thinks he has found in the liberal principle and the institutions conforming to it—the "right of exchange [*Tauschrecht*]"—the fundamental principle of social

hygiene, and in the settlement cooperative [*Siedlungsgenossenschaft*] the healing serum, that will drive both the troublemaker of private large-scale landownership and also the evil of capitalist exploitation out of the social body.

What Gumplowicz objects to this indicates quite correctly the separation point that divides us from Oppenheimer, but cannot be regarded as an adequate refutation of Oppenheimer.[5] If Gumplowicz points out that in countries like Switzerland and Denmark, where major landownership has never played a great role, or like England, where the migration from the countryside to the cities no longer plays a notable role anymore, still exploitative capitalism and misery prevail nonetheless, then Oppenheimer will retort that firstly today one can no longer simply tear individual countries out of global intercourse—"the whole world is a city", Gumplowicz says himself—and that secondly there the serum has, after all, not yet been introduced. And to the questions: Should we wait? Should we be content? he will answer: Not at all. Agitate, organise wherever you can, struggle in trade unions, struggle politically, but just do not imagine that by this alone you will be able to bring about the collapse of the capitalist economy or successfully extirpate it by way of forcible expropriation. Rather, help me organise settlement cooperatives, they are the lever to lift the capitalist world off its hinges. Look, if the example from German economic history does not convince you, to Ralahine, look to Vineland, look to Utah, and see what was achieved there in our century, where specially-designated institutions banned *superannuated growth* [*Zuwachsrente*], this product of the absorption of and by large-scale landownership.[6]

The refutation of Oppenheimer demands the proof:

1. that his *deductions* either suffer from an *internal flaw*, or
2. are built on false *premises*;
3. that his *remedy* [*Mittel*] is either *wrong*, or
4. *insufficient*, or
5. is *more circuitous* and *takes more time* than others, which lead just as surely or even more surely to the same goal.

The goal is here always: the greatest possible economic, political, and ethical well-being for all.

Anyone who has a different goal in mind as their highest compass, such as perhaps a certain formal societal order, or for whom that goal is indissolubly intertwined with such an order from the outset, with them any

scientific debate is in vain. As unavoidably necessary as it is to set ourselves certain goals for our practical activity, and as important as it is to base these goals on scientific insight into society, true science is only possible where the final goal, insofar as it cannot be described by a concept that is free of all *a priori* construction, is treated as an open question. Where in regard to this point agnosticism does not prevail, where every preconceived opinion is not subordinated to the striving for knowledge, there one can be sure at some point or other that one will come upon a violation of scientificity. The scientific form of argument is then only deception or self-deception.

II. The Point of Departure and Remedy of Oppenheimer's Social Liberalism

Oppenheimer starts out in his foundational deductions from "pure economics". Against this naturally there can be no objection, especially since he afterwards seeks to harden them on the basis of actual economic history. Pure economics assumes purely economic man, this sublimate of *homo sapiens oeconomicus communis*, as it moves through the entirety of political economy. This interesting personality, which consistently lets itself be guided by the economic motive, one has done the honour of deploying as the guarantor of historical materialism against my "liberalism". Nothing is more fallacious than that. In fact, precisely it is a premise or construction of economic liberalism, and as such is called—Bentham. Economic utility as the driving force of commerce, the dependency of human beings on their surroundings, the doctrine of class interest and class morality, all of this, although it was not discovered by the theorist of English radicalism—one finds these ideas, as incidentally he himself emphasises, already in many authors who were writing before him—but it was developed by him more systematically than by others before him. Against their will those who appealed to these propositions of insight against me have borne witness to the correctness of my arguments about the close kinship of socialist ideational content with the fundamental idea of liberalism. Despite the caustic mockery that he pours on Bentham, Marx stands through the connective link of English socialism on Bentham's shoulders.[7]

Only one must not assume that Bentham was so absurd that for him the human was only a being of crudely material utility. He was thoroughly

aware of the manifoldness of human motives, and took account of the precept that error lurks behind all generalisation almost to the point of exaggeration. Oppenheimer too shows himself to be far removed from the foolishness of wanting to present in economic man the real human being. But with the latter, which is a synthesis of all possible manner of drives, there is not much that economic theory can do. It must pick out the quality that is decisive for it, economic motive, which after all in the rule acts as the strongest motive reason for human beings in their economic activities. And so, Oppenheimer constructs, following Thünen, an economic principle that he calls the Law of Flows [*Gesetz der Strömungen*].[8] According to this, human beings flow along the line of least resistance from the site of the highest economic pressure to the site of the lowest economic pressure, until eventually a kind of equilibrium has been reached, which however is only possible to the extent that outside obstructions do not stand in its way. These preserve or increase inequalities and cause crises, etc. That is his highest theoretical premise. If it falls, so too does his entire edifice. But is it correct?

It will hardly occur to the adherent of historical materialism to wish to dispute this *a priori*, since, as can be seen from the above, it is rooted in the same line of thought from which this too derives. For Oppenheimer also claims somewhere (I cannot find the place right at this moment) that with it he has only formulated the fundamental idea of historical materialism—without amalgamating it with philosophical or unphilosophical materialism. He is in his economism even more radical than it is. With him, the economic motive rules history. Human beings are for him, viewed economically,

> as equal as droplets in a stream or molecules in a gas. … They all have in all their variety still *one* thing in common: the flow towards equilibrium, and this common quality alone is decisive; because all differences cancel each other out, only the one common tendency appears as a diagonal out of the parallelogram of the millions of individual forces: downhill to the minimum (namely of pressure). Abstract human nature is despite all of this the point of departure for economics.[9]

We have here a test of Oppenheimer's deduction. It has something powerful in its diction. The cited work by Oppenheimer recalls in many respects Lassalle, and specifically Lassalle in his best works. It is the same cohesive argumentation, where sentence after sentence follow each other

in sequence like links in a chain in a firm framework. The same skill in mastering substantive detail, and the same urge, the same method of scientifically "dissecting" the reader, of leaving them no way out. But anybody who does not let themselves be fully taken in by this charming dialectic still finds links in the chain whose metal shows concerning cracks.

"Because all differences cancel each other out." With the most debonair mien, this as-yet wholly unexamined statement slides into the company of well-founded clauses, and behaves as if it were their equal. Factually, however, it depends very much on the context whether all differences cancel each other out. The scope and the nature of these differences is very varied at different levels of culture, and along with the concept of prosperity and customs change also the nature and force of the economic motive. Why do the agricultural workers flow everywhere into the cities? Say not that it is the better wages and better treatment that draws them there. That is often the case, but by no means always. Why do thousands upon thousands in the countries with still great tracts of free land prefer to remain in the centres and lead a pitiful life there, instead of availing themselves of the possibilities offered them of settlement on free land? Because social motives of a non-economic nature have a stronger effect on them than purely economic motives.

No, the other differences do not cancel each other out, they are and remain forces that, as the case may be, act as a stronger or weaker counterweight to the force of economic motives added together. With that, the principle described as the Law of Flows is not negated, it is only its panacean force, its all-conquering power that is denied. As a law of tendencies it is undoubtedly present, about that there can be no dispute among reasonable people, and in the fullness of time it will to a certain degree assert itself against all cross-cutting forces in one way or another again and again. But how long this time is, how this way is constituted, and how high this degree, that is always the question, and the further question is whether under these circumstances it does not befit us reason-endowed, feeling "societal molecules", called human beings, instead of looking on and letting thousands go under because of it, to help along this cause according to the gauge of our insight and means.

The rigid Manchesterian will say: Hands off! *Volenti non fit iniuria* [to a willing person no injury is done]! Should the agricultural worker be so stupid as to run from beautiful free nature into the city and there to reside on a miserable wage in a musty room in their dismal quarters, then they just have to suffer the consequences. And whoever idly squats where the

rush is overwhelming and the strongest pressure prevails, them too no God can help either. They are not on the level of *homo sapiens oeconomicus*. Let experience teach the people to become this, or give them economic catechisms in their hand that inform them about supply and demand, etc.

On this point, Oppenheimer deviates from orthodoxy. He says: Let us not serve these poor devils printed books, but rather a clearly demonstrative example. An example that must not only provoke them to imitation, but also, by doing so, goes after the bacillus of large-scale landownership. *Voilà mon ours*: the settlement cooperative.

The settlement cooperative, as Oppenheimer has conceived of it in his work that carries the same name as its title, is imagined as a free cooperative founded on common ownership of land, which combines social-economic—collectivist—large-scale enterprise with private-commercial small enterprise, for agriculture, which forms its foundation, and industry alike, through mutual institutions [*Gegenseitigkeitseinrichtungen*] of all kinds, and is constructed in such a way that merely the *economic interest* of its members is to guarantee both the success of the whole and the inflow and willing admission of new members. The same motive would, once a practical example is given, act as a sufficient drive for its imitation. Oppenheimer finds himself justified in this assumption by the circumstance that in his theoretical construction of the settlement cooperative, he took into account all the experiences that have been made hitherto with similar creations in practice, avoided all identifiable internal causes of failures, and has brought into play as far as possible all the forces that permit him to count on success. In other words: for everything that concerns economics, only the economic motive is appealed to.

III. The Flaw in Oppenheimer's Calculation

I consider the settlement cooperative, as I have explained elsewhere, to be a very imaginatively conceived economic form, which, sofar as we can draw conclusions from our experience, carries many guarantees for success within itself.[10] But that it alone by itself, through its mere example, should give impetus to so strong a generalisation and then have so regenerating an effect on the entire economy as Oppenheimer presents it—namely to put an end to all nomadic right and bring about the "equilibrium state" where two masters always run after one worker each—for that my faith in it is not strong enough. For that, our society is too complicated, our needs are too multifaceted, the conditions in the countryside are too varied, and

further in almost all of the more developed countries the countryside has already lost too much in its impact on the cities.

Oppenheimer's examples here bear witness against him. Ralahine, the well-known Irish experiment—in my view also otherwise no proof for what is customarily supposed to be proven with it—left behind, when its owner went bankrupt, no traces of its activity, and the cooperative at Assington is vegetating along roughly-and-readily without finding any imitators.[11] Vineland and Utah are good examples for the flourishing of the economy in the absence of superannuated growth, but this absence was not effected by settlement cooperatives but rather was envisaged from the outset. Utah, the well-known Mormon colony, indeed shows the great advantages of a fusion of collectivist and private-commercial institutions that are adjusted judiciously to requirements and circumstances.[12] But Utah also has its downsides, and has hitherto carried out as good as no "propaganda of the deed", that is, of impact through its mere example. One can adduce it as partial proof for Oppenheimer's theory, but never for the whole of it. Precisely where what is needed is a proof for the irresistible healing power of the settlement cooperative serum, it misfires. Incidentally, I also do not want to so lightly subscribe to Oppenheimer's remark that in Utah the (Mormon) Church was only an attendant phenomenon of an economic state in which all interests run in parallel.[13] In my view, what we have there instead is a good deal of reciprocal interdependency. The great if also not unlimited hardy resilience of the religious colonies and the low resilience of the purely economic communist and semi-communist colonies against their capitalist environment has been documented all too often to be able to be regarded as a coincidence.

Oppenheimer readily falls into the trap of juristically disposed natures, of wanting to prove too much. It is a little exaggerated, but still not quite wrong if I say that someone who has his dialectic at their disposal could also prove that the foundation of the economic well-being of the Mormon colony is to be found in their polygamy, and that this is not entirely immaterial to the flourishing of the unique farming economies in Utah even seems very probable to me.[14] And further, the experimental significance of the successes of the Mormons is inhibited by the fact that Utah's institutions stem from a time where it still lay far removed from the great centres and arteries of intercourse of their civilisation.

Now certainly Oppenheimer says: if these simple people could accomplish all of this in the salty desert outside their old culture with more-or-less nothing to start from, what would have been achieved if only the

territory tilled by them in the heart of Old Europe with its civilised means were to have been cultivated according to the same system? The question recalls Lassalle's: if the cooperatives have accomplished so much without any help from the state, what would they only be able to achieve with its help? Perhaps more, but also perhaps far less. These new conditions do not merely signify a quantitative addition, they mean a totally changed character of the whole, a shift in legal relations and of social, or rather moral connections. And those too are economic potentialities, even if they are not immediately themselves of an economic character.

Yet with that, the probative value of the aforementioned examples is only supposed to be reduced to a level that seems reasonable to me, but in no way fundamentally to be disputed. In my view, France and Ireland offer us far more fitting examples for the social-political effect of the agrarian reform that Oppenheimer aspires to—France, which through its great Revolution put an end to feudal large-scale landownership and created a great free peasantry, Ireland, where the agrarian legislation of 1881 carried out a piece of a similar reform. Although here the means—the removal of the pressure of agrarian superannuated growth—is not radical, but still every time it is realised up to a certain point, and this too on a wide scale amidst the economic circle of the civilised world. It would hence be no unrewarding work for Oppenheimer at some point to examine how far the bit of his reform that was realised in France has brought about the results to be expected according to his theory. There he will come upon much that can likewise count as experimental confirmation of this theory, but also many phenomena that show its limits.

But there is no such thing as a completely faultless example. Pure cultivation on virgin soil outside the confines of civilisation cannot provide it, because in it most of its repercussions are missing, and the partial experiments within the civilised world can naturally only deliver partial results.[15] Yet now for the foreseeable future in the domain of the global economy, in light of the variety of conditions in the individual countries, we can always only expect partial realisations of the recipe, so that its blessing substantially remains restricted to certain circles or classes. That is the case to a high degree in, e.g., France, and it already also shows itself in Salt Lake City and elsewhere in Utah. All reasons not to limit ourselves to fighting for Oppenheimer's remedy.

IV. The Liberal Principle and State Intervention

In his essay *The Crisis in Marxism*, Oppenheimer claimed that I am returning "purely economically" to liberalism, and am preaching "economic self-help in cooperatives and trade unions" in the vein of the kind of liberalism which he shortly beforehand had defined as "opponent of state intervention in economic relations". One must give inventors some credit, and Oppenheimer is only too much of an inventor.[16] But how he was able to brand me as an enemy of state intervention in economic affairs is incomprehensible to me. I have spoken out against exaggerated notions regarding the possibilities of the direct takeover of production by the state and communities, but I have not even dreamt of declaring myself against state or municipal enterprise in principle. Even less could it occur to me to wish to resist other forms of state intervention in principle. On the contrary, precisely I have determinedly challenged the perspective that only conceives the state as an organ of oppression, and overlooks or forgets its function as an organ of the societal division of labour. Not to speak at all of the state supervision of industry through factory laws, etc., for in my missive to the Stuttgart party conference, I expressly emphasised these alongside the increase in the field of work of the local communities as a signature of the societal action to counter the exploitative tendencies of capital that has set in in the more advanced countries under the influence of democratic institutions and the pressure of the workers' movement, which is stirring ever more strongly.

In Germany, Social Democracy overwhelmingly rejects the idea of the nationalisation of productive institutions in the face of our political conditions. So it could not occur to me to suggest such nationalisation when discussing the next tasks of Social Democracy. But the demands that Social Democracy makes of the state with regard to the education system, workers' protections, health policy, transportation, etc., are thoroughly acknowledged in my work. Likewise the further expansion of communal owner-operated enterprises [*Eigenbetriebe*]. Regarding the more remote future, I place the main weight on the creation and expansion of institutions that seem required for the highest possible degree of socialisation and democratisation of the economy. I have often said that I consider the nationalisation of everything to be a nebulous notion, and far off in the hazy distance to my understanding lies the idea, put out here and there, that the entirety of civilised humanity will one day form a single great bartering cooperative. But that the *primary ownership of the state*, which

already today is recognised in principle, will be further extended *in the most varied forms*, and, supported on the other hand by free collectivistic creations, will draw ever closer boundaries around the exploitative function of capital, of that I am convinced, and in it my socialism is rooted.

And your liberalism? Oppenheimer will perhaps interject here. Now I think that I have expressed clearly enough that for me it lies in the *democratic character* of economic and administrative institutions, in the *equality of rights* and the *self-responsibility* of the members of society who are capable of working, which is adhered to in principle even if it is mitigated economically, and in the *self-administration* of collective entities under public law. In the opposition to the exclusive special rights of individuals or classes, and to all restrictions that are not made imperative by considerations for the well-being and the highest possible freedom of all without distinction of descent and tendency of thought, is where I see the *substantive hallmark of the liberal idea*, of which the so-called Manchester doctrine only represents one asymmetrically exaggerated derivation. Under this reading, I was able to place the legal maximum working day—cf. pp. 129–30 of my work—in principle alongside the ban on selling oneself permanently into personal slavery.[17] Naturally, there are questions that do not let themselves be settled out of hand through abstract formulae, because the interests that come into consideration become so complicated that none of them shows absolute overwhelming weight. Here it must be left to the insight of those who are respectively called upon to decide to find the solution that comes closest to the spirit of this guiding fundamental principle.

Not *whether* and *how much* is nationalised, but rather *how* it is nationalised and how it is *administered* by the state is a question for which the liberal principle comes into consideration. Not *that objects* and *rights* of property-ownership are restricted, but *how many* and for what *reasons*, specifically for what *purpose* they are restricted, whether there is a sensible relationship between purpose, degree, and effect. Every restriction above and beyond the predetermined purpose, and every restriction that is counterproductive or nonsensical in nature is surely to be described as illiberal—always presuming purposes that fall within the aforementioned framework. So the question under which circumstances and to what degree free competition is appropriate is in the first instance not a question of the liberal principle, but rather of purpose and expediency.

Oppenheimer says at one point: “But the moment that it turned out that under the influence of the system of free competition, which in all essential points after all still predominated … an improvement of social

relations took place…".[18] Anyone who calmly puts up with this sentence is irrevocably in the power of our friend, he has collared them with an iron grip. But only a brief glance is needed to recognise where the trap lies here. This *in all essential points* is just as devious a particle as the famous *last resort*, or the most insidious of all the words in our lexicon: *thus*. In all essential points in fact means: not in all points. Free competition today is restricted in various ways: through elementary schooling [*Volksschule*], through factory laws, through sanitary provisions, through public services of all kinds, through the coalitions of workers and the weight of public opinion, which turns ever more strongly in their favour under the influence of the general franchise. So proof needs to be brought forward that this slow improvement is not owed precisely to these restrictions of free competition. If it cannot be provided, then the theory that free competition brings about improvement by its own accord is left hanging in limbo. Even if we attribute these coalitions to competition, enough factors of a political and social nature are still left over to let the view that it is merely free competition that is working here as a healing angel appear unproven and unprovable. As I have repeatedly explained to representatives of this perspective—among them, if I am not mistaken, Prof. Jul. Wolff as well—I attribute the greatest part of this improvement precisely to these social and political factors, as well as the strengthened resilience of the working class.

Now how does Oppenheimer stand towards the factors I have enumerated? According to which principles does he measure his stance towards the questions of workers' protection, state enterprise, and communal administration? Where does he draw the line here? For he too is not an absolute Manchesterian. Only if he gives his view on this, which was not the case in the works cited, will one be able to come to a definite verdict on his social liberalism.

The word social liberalism is ambiguous, just as incidentally the term social democracy is too, which in its interpretation has undergone many changes. The man who introduced the latter term in Germany and thereby determined its direction—Gottfried Kinkel—was challenged by nobody more vigorously than by Marx and Engels.[19] Later, it became the watchword for all sections of Germany's workers' party, but thereby at the same time also covered very different perspectives, and even today it does not symbolise a settled doctrine, but only a campaigning party. The term social liberalism has as yet never served as the banner of a campaigning party, nor has it achieved validity as the description of a specific doctrine; one can imagine everything possible by it. If it is only meant to mean a strong

emphasis on the liberal principle in socialism, then nobody would be more inclined to accept this than the author of this work. And not just for the first time today. Rather, I have at all times—many articles in the Zurich *Sozialdemokrat* bear witness to this—energetically defended the perspective that the principled opposition is not between liberalism and socialism, but between capitalism and socialism. Capitalism, the domination of capital power, is the exploiter, but not the incarnation of the liberal principle. Hence, social-liberal so far in no way meant something that was in any way fundamentally different from Social Democracy.

But Oppenheimer raises the principle of free competition, which for me is only an *application* of a further-reaching idea of right, and as such has to legitimise itself through its effects, to the level of a decisive principle *quand-même*. I am not going to join him in that. Oppenheimer believes that one can get through free competition to socialism, that is, to a state of affairs in which ground rent and capital profit have disappeared, and production, even if it is carried out by capitalists, has a cooperative character. I have my doubts about the possibility of reaching that goal in this way, and I do not recognise the necessity of imposing the restriction that this expresses on the movement. The tremendous expansion of the field of struggle and the great manifoldness of societal attachments make it necessary to tackle our work from all sides. And if the political struggle, which Oppenheimer after all does recommend, is not forever to turn on formal rights, then it can only have the purpose of making through the attainment of democracy the compulsory cooperative associations of state and local community serviceable to economic emancipation.

That this is no entirely simple matter, that blind or doctrinaire arbitrariness here, as the case may be, can wreak a lot of damage, should be readily admitted. If force as an economic potentiality is to have creative effects, it must self-evidently be applied with reason. But the limit of state, legislative, and municipal action is drawn by its social fruitfulness, and not by considering the principle of competition. It is a matter of the societal division of labour, and experience must show how much state and communities can accomplish in this regard.

Since for the foreseeable future I believe in neither a takeover of the entirety of production on the part of the state and the communities, nor in breaking apart states today into autonomous local commercial entities (domestic colonies or the like), then I consider the expansion of free economic cooperatives to be a necessary complement to the economic functions of state, communities, and other compulsory cooperative associations.

That is the quintessential point of my book, and should show sufficiently why I cannot agree with Oppenheimer's social liberalism. Oppenheimer claims that I, like him, am an optimist. Indeed I am, but in a different way to him. He is one "purely economically", I am, if one wants to use this term, a social optimist. I see throughout all the reprisals by reactionary powers today a development taking place and gaining ground—different in form than how many have imagined it, but still in the same direction and towards the result they aspire to. Oppenheimer is only right insofar as free competition is not the monster that it appeared to be to many socialists, that it takes fewer violent means against it to break off its poison teeth, that it for a great part can be beaten on its own turf. But he goes wrong in his deductions because he now strictly divides the concepts of social and purely economic, now treats them as identical; and he goes wrong in his proposals because he latches onto one remedy, which may well fit for certain purposes, but is insufficient to achieve the goal he aspires to, and above all takes up far more time than can be justified in the face of the evils that must be fought against, and that is needed to fight against them. The moment of time is fully underestimated by him here.

* * *

So much for the practical side of Oppenheimer's social liberalism. The insightful value of his theoretical examinations, specifically the theoretical part of these, is barely touched by this. For that reason I also did not go into his noteworthy arguments on the crisis question, theory of population, etc., here, but am instead reserving coming back to them on other occasions—*inter alia* in the already-mentioned work on the wage problem. Undoubtedly, Oppenheimer has a keenly analytical mind and is a skilful dialectician. But as a theorist too he is not unbiased enough. That makes it necessary to be careful with him, but it does not prevent him from shedding brighter light on certain questions, picking out many problems more acutely, and recognising some flawed conclusions more sharply than his predecessors. He is always stimulating, even where he exaggerates. I have already commented that I have found little that is new in principle with him. But that is not what it comes down to either. In general, little that is new is accomplished in theory, and almost always only in *de facto* small doses. The credit of apparent innovation often only consists in finding a new, sharper form and better argumentation for traditional ideas. It is here that I primarily see Oppenheimer's literary merits. His discussion

about large-scale landownership contains, just as incidentally that of the settlement cooperative already does too, truly brilliant passages, where one is unsure of what one should wonder at more: the language which is downright classic in its clarity and forcefulness, the cohesive unity of his line of thought, or the acuity of his analysis. A significant piece of economic history is cast in a wholly new light by Oppenheimer from the perspective of a principle that he partly overestimates, but which is very important nonetheless. Beyond the task of uncovering his one-sidednesses, one must not forget the other, no less important task of taking up what he has actually proved and accordingly correcting or expanding one's own theory.

Let us summarise. Taken *verbatim*, the term *social-liberal*, like the term *social-democratic*, is a tautology; there is no liberalism and no democratism [*Demokratismus*] that would not be social in nature. Social-liberal only makes sense as a contraction of socialist-and-liberal, as a shorter version of *liberal-socialist*. But wherein can liberal-socialist distinguish itself conceptually from the concept democratic-socialist? Is there a principled opposition between liberalism and democracy?

There is definitely a difference between them, as any analysis that even only somewhat gets to the bottom of the matter will show. Neither historically nor conceptually are they to be regarded as identical. But no more are they mutually opposed principles. Rather, one can describe them as complementing or qualifying one another. At earlier stages of development or in backwards countries, an illiberal democratism is possible by all means, without therefore appearing to be a contradiction, but today such a system in advanced countries could only be regarded as a regression, an anachronism. An undemocratic liberalism, by contrast, is already conceptually a contradiction in itself. For liberalism means historically as well as conceptually: opposition to special rights. Liberal parties which are not democratic are either remnants of an epoch where the struggle against certain privileged rights of birth or estate and against feudal bondage and exceptionalism still signified the vital interest of social progress, or they merely represent certain aspects of the liberal principle. So are with an additionally restricted definition the parties of capitalist free trade, so the liberal parties of the right, for whom absolutism as a method is even more hated than absolutism as a system of government. However, that is either false or at best partial liberalism.

A social liberalism that does not want to fall under these rubrics may hence today not be an undemocratic or anti-democratic socialism, nor wish to distinguish itself in this respect from struggling Social Democracy.

It is different as far as the purely economic and further societal-theoretical principles are concerned. Here, where even struggling Social Democracy in many points is in a state of constant development, can a socialist doctrine that deviates from the dominant view in the party of struggle [*Kampfpartei*] completely rightfully choose that name as its characteristic designation. But whether it is to be regarded merely as a modification or as a counterpoint to the former then always still depends on its relationship to its relevant fundamental propositions. But now what are the fundamental propositions of the doctrine of collectivism defended by militant Social Democracy, i.e., the social-democratic party? If we read through its literature, we will find even in its classical representatives depictions that differ on this point. One talks simply of transferring all the means of production and exchange into the collective ownership of society, another only about transferring the *capitalist* means of production and exchange, without adding anything more definite about the delimitation of this concept, and in the agitatory literature the idea of collectivisation or socialisation is then occasionally limited to *major* capitalist business-enterprises. So here too there still prevails a strong difference between the general *a priori* principle and the conceptions of its most expedient translation into practice, and we become all the more clearly aware of this difference the more factual development brings us closer to the political preconditions of that translation. Then we simply cannot get by with the vague concept of societalisation [*Vergesellschaftung*] any longer, then it is called, as the case may be, nationalisation [*Verstaatlichung*], communalisation [*Kommunalisierung*], cooperative enterprise, and that grants the matter a somewhat different aspect. Yet as a lodestar we retain the interest of the entire community [*Gesamtheit*] in the most profitable use of the land and the remaining means of production, and the highest physical and moral well-being of its members. Everything, even the form of economic enterprises, remains subordinated to this perspective—which, however, excludes the subordination of the workers to capital absolutism. But this also means that no economic object, no economic sphere counts as untouchable for it. How far the social economy is implemented is a matter of experience, of social expediency. Decisive for the collectivist principle is the subordination of all economic domains and economic objects to the control of the entire community. A social liberalism that rejects this idea in principle, or makes exceptions for some sphere of production or other on principle, stands in contradiction to the collectivism of Social Democracy.

Notes

1. In the Fourierist scheme, the concept "societary" refers to the private property of citizens who combine together in a joint constructive project, whose share certificate entitles them to the right to a share in the profits. Friedrich Wilhelm Hermann Wagener (1815–1889), German jurist, conservative politician and ministerial official, editor-in-chief of the *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (*Kreuzzeitung*) (1848–1854), advised Otto von Bismarck on social questions and facilitated conversations between Bismarck and Ferdinand Lassalle, originator of repeated efforts to give German conservatism a more socially-conscious orientation, albeit with limited success.
2. Theodor Hertzka (1845–1924), Austrian political economist, journalist, and publicist, promoted influential utopian models of free-market settlement cooperatives in European colonial holdings. Hermann Jastrow (1849–1916), German jurist. Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943), German doctor, sociologist, and political economist, influential precursor of the "social market economy", promoted *rapprochement* between liberal and socialist models of social reform, strong supporter of Zionism and cooperative enterprise.
3. Albert Eberhard Friedrich Schäffle (1831–1903), German political economist, sociologist, and publicist, advocate of state interventionism but opposed to socialism on the grounds of its alleged incompatibility with democracy.
4. Franz Oppenheimer, *Großgrundeigentum und die soziale Frage* (Berlin: Vita, 1898). Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909), Polish jurist and sociologist, theorist of group conflict and defender of the dominant role of cultural-environmental factors over biological heredity in determining human behaviour, influenced thinkers as diverse as Oppenheimer, Émile Durkheim, and Harold Laski.
5. [Ed. B.—With this remark, I however in no way want to foolishly imply that Gumplowicz has provided a thorough refutation of Oppenheimer in this short article. He evidently only wanted to emphasise a few decisive aspects. But here he has made the mistake of presenting his opponent's case too unfavourably, which saps the force from any refutation that wants to apply permanently.]
6. Oppenheimer, *Großgrundeigentum und die soziale Frage*, pp. 61–2. The Ralahine Commune (1831–1833) in Country Clare, Ireland, was a cooperative commune that experimented with achieving self-sufficiency by paying its workers in "labour notes" that could be spent at the commune's shop. The Utah territory (later U.S. state) of the Mexican Cession became the locus for intensive Mormon settlement (1847–) after the expulsion of

the Latter Day Saints movement from Illinois, with its epicentre in the Salt Lake Valley. Vineland, New Jersey, was originally founded (1862) by Charles K. Landis as a utopian temperance town, rooted in agriculture and progressive social norms.

7. [Ed. B.—William Thompson, one of the most significant representatives, if not even the finest mind of early English socialism, was a student of Bentham's, with whom he lived for several years. Bentham's kindred spirit, James Mill, the father of John Stuart Mill, corrected the manuscript of Owen's foundational work about the formation of the human character. That Bentham, put into personal contact with Owen by Mill, contributed 10,000 pounds sterling to his New Lanark endeavour, is well known.]
8. Johann Heinrich von Thünen (1783–1850), German agronomist, economic geographer, and social reformer, early advocate of using mathematical methods in economic analysis.
9. Oppenheimer, *Großgrundeigentum und die soziale Frage*, p. 178.
10. [Ed. B.—*The Preconditions of Socialism*, p. 114. As I have already remarked there, the settlement cooperative shows similarities in many contours with Owen's domestic colonies. One could describe them as a reformed domestic colony, which relates to Owen's in the same way as the modern consumer cooperatives do to Owen's. It will here be interesting that Owen announced the foundation of a Cooperative and Economical Society in the *Economist* in 1821, which in its plan came closer to the settlement cooperative insofar as it sought to unify individual acquisition and collectivistic use of means. But it was conceived as a cooperative of urban workers.]
11. Assington, Suffolk, was the site of a private cooperative agricultural society (1830–c. 1860, defunct 1918), founded by John Gurdon, that fostered collective farm labour conducted for mutual benefit at a time of extremely low wages.
12. [Ed. B.—cf. Oppenheimer's essay "Utopia as a Fact", in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, vol. II, issue 3.]
13. [Ed. B.—*op. cit.*, p. 201.]
14. [Ed. B.—"We have 19,916 farms in Utah, and of them 17,684 are *free of all debt.*" Inaugural speech of Governor Hebe M. Wells in January 1896. (*op. cit.*, p. 200)]
15. [Ed. B.—That where there is free land, forceful means—brutal violence, binding through laws, etc.—are required to create proletarians, is acknowledged more or less unreservedly by all economists. The chapter "Modern colonial policy" in *Capital* contains *in nuce* everything that Oppenheimer needs to justify his initial thesis. But only for this one. Even Dühring, whom Oppenheimer counts among his teachers, emphasised very early on against overestimations of the "open economic territories" the counterweight of social ties.]

16. [Ed. B.—With this, I mean that he attributes excessive weight to his inventions in the domain of social reform. They are in my view the least significant aspect of his works, and only new in certain details. That is not supposed to be derogatory. To refer back once again to Lassalle, he did not come up with a single new idea as a reformer. And even anyone who does not subscribe to Marx's famously harsh words about Lassalle as an economist cannot deny that Lassalle as an economist only repeated what others have already said or clothed it in new, all the same often very expressive forms. Even the originality of the fundamental ideas of Heraclitus and his system is challenged here and there. Yet all of this does not take away from the fact that Lassalle accomplished great things in illuminating social insight. But the significant parts of his theoretical achievements never became popular. Indeed, one of his most ingenious statements—the realisation of the development towards non-remuneration [*Unentgeltlichkeit*]—was misunderstood even by Rodbertus, and earned him, it seems, from this man the accusation that he was—to express it in the form favoured today—leading the way "back to Bastiat". I mean the note to paragraph 7 of the *System of Acquired Right*, which I have described as Lassalle's historical-philosophical programme (*Complete Edition*, p. 791ff.)

    This note, and the ensuing controversy between Lassalle and Rodbertus, shed light on the theme treated in the text here too. Lassalle disputes the accuracy of Rodbertus' interjection by referring to his acceptance of the iron law of wages. But if one gives this up, then Lassalle's deduction, insofar as one otherwise accepts it, certainly easily lead beyond Bastiat and past Malthus to—Oppenheimer.

    I will come back to this point in an essay about the law of wages that is to be published imminently, and will only remark further here that what has been said in the above regarding Lassalle's popularity can also quite rightly be said of Marx. What are portrayed in popular writings as discoveries of Marx's are actually not at all Marx's original accomplishment, and what Marx said that was really theoretically new has not penetrated into the popular consciousness. It is in general the fate of almost all significant scientific achievements only for now to become popular for the second- or third-hand insights they contain.]
17. Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, Henry Tudor (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 147–8.
18. [Ed. B.—Franz Oppenheimer, *The Crisis in Marxism*, p. 597.]
19. Johann Gottfried Kinkel (1815–1882), German evangelical theologian, cultural historian, writer, and democratic politician, participant in the 1848–1849 Baden Revolution, later researcher for the South Kensington Museum (now Victoria and Albert Museum).

CHAPTER 14

How is Scientific Socialism Possible?

The immediate object of all art is either pleasure or utility: the immediate object of all science is solely truth. As art and science have different objects, so also have they different faculties. The faculty of art is to change events; the faculty of science is to foresee them. The phenomena with which we deal are controlled by art; they are predicted by science. The more complete a science is, the greater its power of prediction; the more complete an art is, the greater its power of control
—Henry Thomas Buckle, *The Influence of Women on the Progress of Knowledge*

Like all social reform parties, socialism too has its living wellspring in the glaring imperfections of the present societal order. So long as this spring flows, the struggling party of socialism, Social Democracy, has nothing to fear in self-critique of its theory.
—Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Scientific and Philosophical Crisis within Modern Marxism*

The lecture that forms the content of the present work was held by me on 17 May this year before the Social-Scientific Student Association in Berlin [*Sozialwissenschaftlicher Studentenverein zu Berlin*]. Insofar as written

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preparatory work and my memory allowed me, I have made the effort to reproduce it here exactly as it was delivered in the aforementioned meeting itself. Up to the end of page 20, my arguments were based on a manuscript that was worked out in detail, which I read out *verbatim* along with a couple of merely illustrative additions, and which I have also repeated here unchanged, apart from minor stylistic corrections.[1] The second part, by contrast, I had in front of me in the lecture only in the form of a plan, albeit a fairly extensive one, and so I can perhaps vouch that, as far as it is concerned, it is a faithful preservation of my arguments' line of thought, but not the exact reproduction of these arguments themselves. Where supplementary comments seemed appropriate for the lecture's publication in pamphlet form, I have inserted these in the form of footnotes and short addendums. By contrast, to my knowledge I have not inserted anything into the main text of this little piece that I did not also mention in substance at that meeting.

I find myself obliged to control myself strictly in this regard by, *inter alia*, several commentaries that this lecture has received in the press.[2] I lack the time and, to say this openly, also the inclination to let myself get into press feuds about how individual parts of the lecture are to be understood, or rather—since I am dealing above all with mind-readers—what manner of things I was thinking when I wrote them. Honest mistakes about the tenor of the lecture, which after all are so easy to make compared with the spoken word, its written rendering will rectify. But no amount of rectification will help against malicious interpretations.

In the debate that followed the lecture, Prof. Adolph Wagner identified the most important theoretical objection that can be levelled against it when he suggested that the question I had raised was fundamentally only a matter of a semantic dispute over the concept of science.[3] If one puts definitional dispute in place of semantic dispute, then I will admit the formal justification of that remark. In fact, for me it is *prima facie* a matter of delimitating the concept "scientific". But behind this boundary question about the concept there lies for me—and consciously or unconsciously also for others—a boundary question about theoretical thinking in general, and, as much as it is influenced by this, about practical action. I talk about this in the work itself, and only want to remark here that the problem addressed in it has now preoccupied me for a longer time, and on occasion I have also tabled it for debate. So also in my discussion of Masaryk's work, which appeared two years ago in the *Zeit* of Vienna, about the philosophical and sociological foundations of Marxism.

"Incidentally, it would be worth the effort", it says there, "at some point to examine more precisely inhowfar a theory like the socialist one, which occupies itself with what shall be, *can* be a science and *needs* to be one at all."[4]

This lecture should be understood as a step towards this examination, and I shall be glad if it provides the occasion for a fruitful discussion.

Groß-Lichterfelde, 29 May 1901.

Ed. Bernstein.

I.

The most influential of the socialist theories prevalent in the present day, the theoretical system developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, to which in almost all countries the great majority of the struggling socialists today subscribes as the one that determines the direction of their demands and goals, was described by its authors as scientific socialism. In a work that will be well-known to most of you and deserves to be well-known to you all: *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*—an extract from his polemical work *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, which is no less worth reading—Friedrich Engels says that with the two scientific discoveries that Marx made, namely the *materialist conception of history* and the exposure of *the creation of surplus value* in capitalist society, socialism has become a science.[5] This is the most authentic point, if not also the first one, where the epithet "scientific" is claimed for Marxist socialism. Articles in which this also happens can be found in various pieces of socialist literature that date from before the first publication of this passage in 1877. Even a German socialist who conventionally feuded with Karl Marx, the very talented J. B. von Schweitzer, wrote, when the first volume of Marx's primary work *Capital* appeared, that he said to himself when he had finished reading the book: "Socialism is a science".

However, Marxist socialism, to use this abbreviating expression, is neither the only nor the first socialist theory that has described itself as scientific. In Marx himself, already in the first chapter of *Capital*, you can read in note 24 that no school ever "played more tricks with the word *science*" than that of the French socialist Proudhon.[6] But Proudhon, at the time in which Marx was writing this, was the most influential of the Romance socialists. Yet if you read the works of the two socialist schools in France that appeared before Proudhon, that of the students of Fourier and those of Saint-Simon, and if you go to England and read the writings of the school of Robert Owen, you will come across similar appeals to science

often enough there as well. There is no shortage of them in Lassalle's writings either. One could almost say that pretty much all the socialists of the nineteenth century drew on science for their theory in one way or another.

At first glance, this agreement is apt to arouse our mistrust. After all, it is well-known to us that the greatest differences existed between these schools in their modes of apprehension and reasoning. How vigorously did Proudhon go to war against the Fourierists, and how forcefully did the critical rod of one Karl Marx fall down on precisely this same Proudhon. But Marx himself too met with his own socialist critics, who accused him of the same thing that he had condemned in others: utopianising and metaphysical conceptual games. Not to mention more recent socialist critics of Marx at all, Dr. Paul Brousse, a French socialist who today has been somewhat forgotten, but who played quite an important role in his day and was also a knowledgable man, accused Marx repeatedly of utopianism, and ultimately in an obituary described him as the last great utopian.[7] Now if such great differences of opinion exist among socialists, who all consistently appeal to science, and if, as is in fact the case, these differences do not merely concern superficialities or incidental applications, but rather in many cases go right to the root of the theory—should not there the thought arise that they might all possibly be wrong, that none of them has a claim to the ring in the fable, none of them is justified in describing their socialism as scientific?

However, even if we leave to one side the dispute between systems or theories, and stick to the doctrine that in the struggle for existence among them stands here as the winner today, Marxism, then here too we come up against points that are liable to perplex those with critically-disposed natures.

We have seen that Friedrich Engels derived the scientificity of socialism from two theoretical positions, of which one is the theory of surplus value. Engels writes:

> It was shown that the appropriation of unpaid labour is the basis of the capitalist mode of production and of the exploitation of the worker that occurs under it; that even if the capitalist buys the labour-power of his labourer at its full value as a commodity on the market, he yet extracts more value from it than he paid for; and that in the ultimate analysis this surplus-value forms those sums of value from which are heaped up the constantly increasing masses of capital in the hands of the possessing classes. The genesis of capitalist production and the production of capital were both explained.[8]

According to this, one could be tempted to assume that there should exist an intimate connection between the scientific proof of surplus value and socialism such that the necessity of socialism derives from the fact of surplus value. However, we find in Marx and Engels a whole number of passages that contradict this line of reasoning. The harshest statement belonging to this is in the foreword to the German edition of the *Poverty of Philosophy*, which Engels wrote in 1884. There, Engels turns most decidedly against the view that socialism allows itself to be scientifically derived from the fact of surplus value. This view is, he explains with reference to a statement by Marx, economically formally wrong, for it is "simply *an application of morality to economics*".[9] According to the laws of bourgeois economics, the greatest part of their product does not belong to the workers that have created it. Engels continues:

> If we now say: that is unjust, that ought not to be so, then that has nothing immediately to do with economics. We are merely saying that this economic fact is in contradiction to our sense of morality. *Marx, therefore, never based his communist demands upon this, but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever growing degree*; he says only that surplus value consists of unpaid labour, which is a simple fact.[10]

That sounds so different from the part cited before that the reader initially gets the impression that there is an unresolvable logical contradiction here. First, the theory of surplus value is supposed to provide one of the two scientific cornerstones of socialism, and we know from Engels that he read out the piece of writing in which he says this to Marx and thoroughly discussed it with him as a manuscript before it was typeset, that it had received Marx's approbation, so to speak. And yet now, the surplus value proposition is declared to be inconclusive for socialism. That seems to us, with respect to this one question, to pull the rug out from under our feet.

Someone could now perhaps come and dispute Engels' legitimate justification for the last-cited passage. After all, there has been no shortage of attempts to establish greater differences between Marx and Engels' ways of thinking—nor have these been universal failures, even if in my opinion they mostly reveal significant exaggerations. There are areas in which Engels might not have been a completely accurate interpreter of Marx. But this hardly applies to the present case. After all, we have all manner of statements by Marx himself, from which there quite unmistakeably speaks

a similar view. The passage to which Engels refers at the cited point could likewise permit a different interpretation than Engels'.[11] But if in *Capital* we see that the fact that—in the example discussed there—"the value that the use of labour power (of the wage-labourer) creates over the course of the day is twice as great as its own daily value is a particular fortune for the buyer—the capitalist—but *thoroughly no injustice against the seller*—the worker", or read in Marx's letter about the draft of the Gotha Programme: "Is it"—the distribution of labour product today—"not, in fact, the only "fair" distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production", and directly after that the proof that in every societal form apart from complete communism there is necessarily a quantitative difference between labour remuneration [*Arbeitsbelohnung*] and labour output [*Arbeitsleistung*], then we can no longer be in any doubt that Engels' remark accurately reproduces Marx's view.[12]

And still, in the popular literature of Social Democracy, and specifically also in works that stem from Engels or had his and Marx's full approval, the fact of surplus value is carried into battle in the most decided way as an argument in favour of socialism. In *Capital*, surplus value is again and again identified as exploitation [*Ausbeutung*]—and exploitation, where it is a matter of relations between humans and other humans, always means morally objectionable utilisation [*Ausnutzung*]—which already the linguistic connection with the word spoils [*Beute*] indicates—robbery in a disguised form. The capitalists then also appear, seen socially—not as individuals—as spoliators and usurious profiteers of the working class.

Now how does this tally with the comment by Engels that we touched on? The passages that follow it in Engels give us a pointer about this:

> But what in economic terms may be formally incorrect, may all the same be correct from the point of view of world history. If mass moral consciousness declares an economic fact to be unjust, as it did at one time in the case of slavery and statute labour, that is proof that the fact itself has outlived its day, that *other economic facts* have made their appearance due to which the former has become unbearable and untenable. Therefore, a *very true economic content* may be concealed *behind* the formal economic incorrectness.[13]

That means it is not the mere fact of surplus value that evidences the necessity of the socialist transformation of society. Rather, the disapproval of surplus value by the masses, its appraisal as exploitation is the proof for

the intolerability of the given order, is, if I may express myself in this way, the indicator for the fact that the given conditions have become untenable—only that this untenability is to be found *not* in the appropriation of surplus value, but in *other economic facts*.

If that is correct, then in my opinion it overturns the proposition that with the discovery of surplus value socialism has become a science. However scientifically-advanced or theoretically-unchallengeable the accomplishment itself may be, according to the argument given here it still loses all its scientific conclusive force for socialism. Indeed, according to it, it cannot even count as a scientific proof against the existing society. No more than the discovery that under slave labour the slaves had to produce more than they consumed would have been a scientific proof against the societal order resting on slavery.

Incidentally, I consider the expression "discovery" regarding the establishment of surplus value by Marx to be very misleading. It is generally admitted that the fact of surplus value was known long before Marx, and I must confess that, insofar as this was a matter of establishing the fact that in their wage, the worker does not receive the full difference between the market value of the finished product and the price of the raw materials, wear and tear in tools, etc., this discovery does not seem to me to be a particularly great achievement. What is significant about the relevant chapters in Marx consists in the *uncovering* and in-depth *analysis* of the *way* and *methods* of *the creation of surplus value* in the capitalist economy, and its consequences for societal development. It is even in my opinion fairly irrelevant for the epistemic value of the greatest part of the relevant examinations in Marx whether or not one accepts in all points the derivation of surplus value in the way that Marx undertakes it. It will not be unknown to you that today there is a fairly considerable number of socialists who do not accept at all the starting-point of Marx's theory of surplus value—the breaking-up of value into quantities of human labour, measured according to time—but instead concur with the marginal-value doctrine of the Anglo-Austrian school. But despite this, these socialists do not recognise any the less that the worker today is exploited and must perform surplus labour, only they offer the proof for this in a different, in their view less metaphysical way.[14] Indeed, there are also people who declare the whole project of enlisting the theory of value to prove exploitation to be flawed, and derive exploitation without any theory of value from the theory of production, from surplus product. An example of this is the remarkable book by Professor Antonio Graziadei in Bari: *Capitalist Production*.[15]

But to return to our topic, we have to see, according to Engels, in the moral outrage of the masses about surplus value, in the appraisal of surplus value as exploitation, the indicator for the fact that *other* economic facts make today's economic order, which rests on it, intolerable and untenable. What are these facts?

Engels explains at the point indicated that Marx had founded his communist demands on the necessary collapse of the capitalist mode of production, which was taking place more and more before our eyes. Now, as is perhaps known to you, some time ago very lively debates took place within the ranks of the theorising members of Social Democracy on this view—the derivation of socialism from this collapse—and quite substantial differences of opinion made themselves felt among people who all proceeded from the Marxist school. Since I was myself a participant in these debates, I will not go into them more closely here. It is enough to refer to the fact that in them more than two different views were developed about how this collapse is to be understood, and if you think more precisely about the words from Engels that I have just read out, you will also understand this. What in this context does "necessary" mean, or "collapse of the capitalist mode of production"? With this statement, one can think of an unavoidable economic collapse, of a great economic catastrophe, but one can also think of a great collapse of the societal order that rests on the capitalist mode of production, and between these there are all manner of further conceivable combinations. Next, is this collapse even proved to be *necessary* at all, is it scientifically provable? Or is it not perhaps instead only a more or less likely assumption? And further, can one already derive the scientific necessity of socialism from the collapse of the capitalist mode of production? These are all questions that we have to answer or about whose import we have to become clear if we are seeking to establish the scientificity of socialism. All historical experience speaks and many phenomena of the present day offer evidence in favour of the fact that the capitalist mode of production is just as ephemeral as earlier modes of production; but here what is at stake is the question of whether its end will come about through a collapse, whether this collapse is to be expected in the nearer future, and whether it will *necessarily* lead to socialism. And on this question or these questions the answers that socialists give diverge from one another fairly widely.

It does not go any differently with various other hypotheses or deductions from which socialists otherwise derived the proof for socialism. I only have to remind you of the fate of the so-called iron economic law of

wages, on which Lassalle based his agitation in his day. Rarely was an economic doctrine so firmly believed-in, and with such fervent ardour, as this one. For many long years it was the shibboleth of the modern workers' movement, the creed from which its most prodigious and dedicated fighters drew their spiritual strength. And one fine day it was declared decisively—I almost want to say crudely—that this "law" did not exist; its justification was unscientific, and it had to vanish from our programmes. If I am correctly informed, accepting this new reading cost many upright campaigners quite hard inward struggles, but—it happened. Today that "law" is a thing of the past, more so than is correct in my view—nobody speaks about it anymore. Let me also recall the notion that the economic situation of the workers necessarily becomes worse and worse over the course of the development of capitalism, and becomes ever more miserable—a notion that has been described with the term "theory of immiseration". This view was once widespread, it seemed to be scientifically firmly-rooted—it shone through in the *Communist Manifesto* and finds itself repeated in many writings by the younger socialist generation—but it too has been abandoned today. Then the idea of the parallel nature of development in industry and agriculture, of the melding-together [*Zusammenschmelzen*] of the capitalist class, of the resolution of differentiation in forms of work—an entire list of theories that were seen as scientifically-established, all of which have turned out to be fallacious—no, let us not exaggerate, to be *partial truths.*

However, partial truths are often more fateful for scientificity than whole fallacies, and so one could, in the face of these and other changes in the evaluation of social phenomena by the representatives of socialism—the other foundation of scientific socialism of which Engels speaks, the materialist conception of history, has also been through its own particular quirks of fate—so one could, I say, feel tempted to join in with the chatter about the scientific bankruptcy of socialism. While we see before us on the side of the practical movement socialism constantly on the rise, socialist parties achieving success after success in almost all countries, the workers' movement winning one position after another and ever more surely advancing towards certain goals it has set itself, formulating its demands ever more clearly, in the domain of science, socialism seems to be heading towards not greater unity but the disintegration of the theory. It seems that instead of certainty, doubt and distraction [*Zerfahrenheit*] is taking hold of the theoretical representatives of socialism. And so, if we see how the one does not prevent the other, the question quite naturally arises

whether there is an inherent connection between socialism and science at all, whether a scientific socialism is *possible* and—I add this question as a socialist—whether a scientific socialism is even *necessary* at all.

Do not believe that this is the first time that this question has been brought up. In other countries, very knowledgable men have concerned themselves with it, and your speaker too has posed it already years ago, albeit in somewhat different words. And as it is presented here just now, the question is perhaps also not very expediently formulated.

Permit me at this point to recall an example from another discipline. In the middle of the eighteenth century, great distraction reigned in the domain of philosophy. People's minds seemed not to understand each other anymore. Then in 1781, Immanuel Kant appeared in Königsberg with his *Critique of Pure Reason*, whose primary purpose was to admonish and guide people to self-contemplation about the possible tasks of philosophy, to recognise the boundaries of reasonable philosophising. And when, on account of its somewhat cumbersome diction and internal structure, his book was not straightaway understood, in 1783 he set down its main ideas in a more comprehensible form in a short work that he gave the title *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*. In this work, after the necessary preliminary explications, he poses two questions, which he then answers one after the other with sharp conceptual analysis. The first is: How is metaphysics possible at all? The second: How is metaphysics possible as a science?[16] I believe that the way in which this great philosopher proceeds is a hint to us about what we have to undertake in order to get to a satisfying resolution of the present problem. Naturally, we do not have to pose the questions slavishly in the same form as Kant, but rather we must adjust them to the different nature of the object we are dealing with here; but we must pose them in the same critical spirit as Kant, in the same spirit that is directed just as decisively against *scepticism*, which undermines all theoretical thinking, as against always-complete *dogmatism*. First of all, we have to clarify what we even have to understand under socialism at all, whether it is a matter of some relation between this and science, and then go on to the question: is a scientific socialism possible, and how?

What is socialism? Very different answers are possible to this question, but for our enquiry only those can come into consideration that attach to the conception of a particular societal order. They can be placed into two groups. One can say that socialism is the image, the conception, the doctrine of a certain societal order, and one can conceive of it as the

movement towards a certain societal order. But whether conceived as a state of affairs, a doctrine, or a movement, socialism is always hereby imbued with an *idealistic* element, either with this ideal itself or with the movement towards it. It is thus a piece of *the world beyond* [*Jenseits*]—self-evidently not beyond our planet, on which we live, but certainly beyond that whereof we have positive experience. It is something that *shall* be, or is moving towards what *shall* be. That even applies to the conservative systems of socialism. However, for our consideration we can and want to ignore them, since they only falsely carry the name socialism. If we want to steer clear of all conceptual confusion, then we will do well not to derive the word socialism from the all-too vague concept of *societas* = society [*Gesellschaft*], but rather from the far more definite concept of *socius* = comrade [*Genosse*], specifically from *comradely cooperation* [*Genossenschaft*]. All possible manner of things are societal [*gesellschaftlich*], and in the derivation from the word "societal", the concept "social, socialistic" can be appropriated for endeavours that are fundamentally different from and irreconcilable with what the socialist parties of the present day want. But there is no demand from these parties that does not fit into the frame of the concept "cooperative" [*genossenschaftlich*]. In this sense, I have described the socialist movement at the time as a *movement for cooperativity* [*Genossenschaftlichkeit*], and in this sense it will also be used here from now on.[17]

If one speaks of scientific socialism, then it can only ever be a matter of justifying socialist *aspirations*, socialist *demands*, about the *theory* that underpins these demands. The socialist movement as a mass phenomenon constitutes the object of this theory, which it seeks to understand, to explain, and as the case may be also to defend and instruct about itself—but it is self-evidently no more a scientific movement than was the German Peasants' War, the French Revolution, or some other historical struggle. Socialism as a *science* appeals to one's *insight*, socialism as a *movement* is led by *interest* as its loftiest motivation—although in this it should be expressly remarked that interest here is not understood as exclusively personal, or specifically economic self-interest. There is also a *moral* (socially-perceived), an *idealistic* interest. But *without interest* there is no *social action*. Insight can awaken an interest or lead it, but it is itself externally inactive, so long as it does not enter into an intimate connection with an interest, and merges with it. For its part, a material or ideological interest can foster insight, and serve the dissemination of insight, but it will only do this consciously and deliberately so far as this insight fosters its purposes or at

least does not damage them. There is hence always a potential contradiction between science as the bearer of insight and every political, economic, and speculative interest.

II.

Modern socialism is described by Engels as the creation of the *class struggle* that exists in modern society between the propertied and the propertyless, between bourgeois and wage-labourers. It is clear that, as such, it cannot be the pure movement of a scientific insight. Class struggle is a struggle of *interests*, and even if every interest, in order to lead to a struggle, must be more or less clearly recognised, even if the conception of a struggle between propertied and propertyless—which originally plays out merely occasionally, locally, and within certain professions, and which turns on subordinate matters—as a general, historical class struggle presupposes a fairly advanced insight into societal contexts, then still it consistently remains a struggle in which it is *prima facie* a matter of asserting the interests of a class or party, and not of propositions of insight—and it is about these at all only insofar as they coincide with those interests. To this comes the fact that socialism is more than merely a registrative summary of the points on which the struggle waged by the workers with the owners respectively in the economic and political domain turns. As a doctrine, it is the theory of this struggle, as a movement it is its consolidation with a view towards a specific goal: the transformation of the capitalist societal order into one belonging to a collectivistically-regulated economy. Yet this goal is not merely an act predetermined by the theory, whose occurrence is more-or-less fatalistically expected, but rather it is to a high degree a *willed* goal, for whose realisation one *struggles*. Yet by setting itself such a picture of the future, and to the degree that it makes its conduct in the present dependent on taking into account this goal, socialism is perforce committed to a bit of utopianism. I do not mean that self-evidently in the sense that it aspires to something that is impossible or unlikely, but rather I simply want to assert that it carries an element of speculative idealism within itself, and contains a piece of something that is not scientifically proven and incapable of being scientifically established. The science that comes into question here—sociology—cannot predict with the same certainty with which the exact sciences predetermine certain phenomena that the societal order that socialism aspires to will come to be under *all* circumstances. It can only develop the conditions under

which it will presumably come about, and approximately estimate the degree of its likelihood.

The element in socialism that cannot be known with unconditional certainty is also not remotely to be described as a straightforward mistake in socialist theory. Just as even the strictest of the exact sciences cannot do without hypotheses for its further development, so too applied sociology, which is directed at the progress of society, cannot go without sketching out in advance its putative future development. And such advance depiction is always to a certain degree utopianism. I am using this word here, as I have already remarked, not as equivalent in meaning with extravagantly dreamy fantasy, which flies off into the realm of the unrealisable. Of course, it is frequently used in this sense too, but if it were to be understood in this sense alone, then this would be the greatest injustice in the world—to bring this word into connection with people like Robert Owen, Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, these precursors of modern socialism, whom one conventionally describes as the three great utopians of the nineteenth century.

In the work I have already cited, Engels has rendered the great service of coming to the defence of these aforenamed socialists against the epigonic disparaging criticism which they received at that time, and not only from his adversary Dühring. He returned their memory to a place of honour, and in fact one can still learn from these "utopians" even today. After all, there is also *creative fantasy*, a power of imagination that, supported by a refined gaze for real forces and events, can devise things that are capable of life, and anticipate significant discoveries.[18]

Owen, Saint-Simon, and Fourier were very significant *realists* for their time, if under this one does not understand narrow-minded philistines, who live in the moment, and are oriented only towards what lies right next to them, but instead people who go deeper to the heart of the problems of their time, and manifest a keener gaze for the determination and examination of the forces that determine the activity of human beings than their contemporaries, who follow the currents of the day. Much in their theories and their proposals for practice that today appears to us to be the result of a great naïveté, to be illusory, was far less so for their time, and thoroughly conformed to the conditions in which they lived, and to the forces with which they had to do.[19]

Robert Owen, to begin with him, through intimate engagement with the doctrines of the most advanced philosophers of his epoch and through observations about the social effects of the technical revolutions in

industry reached a conception of society that comes uncommonly close to the materialist conception of history. One proposition, which with him did not remain without exaggerations, but in its foundation was thoroughly rational, which he never tired of preaching, and which forms the starting-point of his proposals for societal reform, namely *that the character of human beings is formed for them and not by them*—this proposition, according to which the predispositions given, or rather transmitted to them at birth by their parents and the contexts that surround them determine human beings' character and their actions, also lies at the basis of Marx's historical materialism; and already in 1815, Owen outlined in one of his writings what far-reaching changes the spread of factory industry would have as a consequence for the entire social life of the nation.[20]

Owen's proposals regarding economic affairs all start out from large-scale industry as the most advanced economic form, his plans for the organisation of collectivist communities—"domestic colonies", as he called them—are rooted in precise calculations, which are underpinned by the *status quo* of technology at the time. If today they appear to us to be utopian because of their shortcomings compared with what he aspired to achieve with them, then for their time they were a step forward away from fantastical utopianism. Owen consistently took pains to follow scientific insight, and the educational institutions that his students called into existence were christened by them "halls of science". Owen's critique of the official economics of his time rarely goes into individual questions, but on the basis of the relevant arguments talented students of his have accomplished significant things in respect of the critique of bourgeois economics.[21]

Charles Fourier endeavoured just as much as Owen to lend his societal reform a scientific foundation, and insofar as in his construction of his world-philosophy and in his depiction of the developments that lay further in the future an untrammelled imagination, tied to a true mania for dialectical conceptual play, also pulled him beyond any permissible hypothesis, then he still retains the credit for having enriched history and social science with a range of very fruitful ideas.[22] In his theory of the drives and passions, he proves himself to be a keen-sighted analyst of the human soul, and his idea of giving all these drives the possibility of activating themselves in free play for the benefit of the whole, his defence of shaping work attractively or dividing it in such a way that it is conducted by those to whose inclinations it conforms the most, can lay claim to lasting value. His treatise about the *association domestique-agricole* is in its critical parts a

masterful *exposé* of the economic conditions of France in the time when Fourier was alive, and the proposals developed in its positive parts for the foundation of great associations that should unify industry, agriculture, and housecraft, are almost more tailored than Owen's domestic colonies to the large-scale economic mode of operation whose advantages Fourier never tires of showing.

With Saint-Simon, it is difficult to find anything whatsoever that allows itself to be described as utopian in the sense of the impossible or improbable, specifically of fantastical speculation. Certainly, his imagination also carries him beyond what lies immediately before him, and allows him to develop ideas that would only be realised or become relevant at a later time. But his imagination is thoroughly underpinned by scientific enquiry and inference. He can be described as the father of modern sociology. What his student and collaborator Auguste Comte later methodically developed and brought into a closed system can be found in its ideational content for the most part already developed in Saint-Simon.[23] From him stems the demand to expand the concept of politics as a science in such a way that it encompasses the entire state of affairs of society; from him the idea that *societal* conditions—the *distribution of property*, *ordering of production*, and *class formation*—constitute the deciding foundations of every respective state constitution; from him the division of phases of development of human spirit into the epochs of the *theological*, *metaphysical*, and *positive*, i.e., *scientific* forms of conception, and the indication that there is a causal connection between these ways of thinking and the respective societal constitution; and from him and Comte ultimately the division of societal states of affairs into periods of *critical* and periods of *organic* existence—the latter ones where between the foundations and the constitution of society *harmony* exists, the former ones where the ideas that underlie the societal order are challenged and lose their binding force; where new classes arise and oppose the ruling powers with hostility, until eventually the contradictions are driven to their highest extremes, the old order is toppled, and a new order is built, a "new religion" is proclaimed, which sufficiently conforms to the changed foundations of societal life, whereby then society once again enters a phase of *organic* existence—"social synthesis". As the class that in the modern era strives upwards to become the decisive element in society appears in Saint-Simon originally that of the *industrialists*, among whom, in accordance with the state of France at the time, commercial business-owners *and* workers are still understood together—the former as the main people, the "chiefs" of

industry. Comte and the positivist school that he founded cleave firmly to this idea, but the actual Saint-Simonian school itself refined the concept of the industrialist, or specifically the producer [*Produzent*], to that of the *worker*, and in the more radical wing of the Saint-Simonians the worker soon turns into the *proletarian*.[24]

Saint-Simon's attempt to found a new Christendom does not lie in any fundamental contradiction with the scientific character of his theory. For this Christendom was not meant to be dogmatic, but a kind of religion of emotion and reason [*Gefühls- und Vernunftsreligion*]. Comte (who lagged behind his teacher in ingenuity, but surpassed him in respect of methodical thinking, which then certainly with him in turn degenerated at times into almost childish pedantries) dropped in name too the connection with the old revealed religions and called his new church *Religion de l'Humanité—religion of humanity*. Any dualism between scientific thinking and religious sentiment was thereby to be dissolved.

Now if we examine in relation to the doctrines of the three so-called utopians the Marxist theory, we will find that although in this the scientific element is significantly more strongly founded and developed than in those, in neither the former any more than in the latter is science *everything*. The domain that is freely left to the imagination, led by tendency and will, is drawn more narrowly and its direction more sharply delimited, but it has for all this still not completely disappeared. Engels identifies in the work cited earlier the difference as being that he argues that Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon were, in accordance with the immaturity of the circumstances that they saw before them, substantially still *inventors* of socialist systems, thinkers who had sought to create more complete systems of a new societal order from out of their heads, which were supposed to be superimposed on society from the outside through propaganda and exemplary experiments; but according to the Marxist theory, the means of societal overthrow are not "to be *invented*, spun out of the head, but *discovered* with the aid of the head in the existing material facts of production".[25] I consider this thoroughly fitting, sofar as thereby the direction of the course of development is identified that leads from the aforenamed three socialists and the students who continued their theoretical work to Marx and Engels. On this course of development, the relationship between invention and discovery indeed shifts ever more in favour of the latter. Yet all the same, the statement contains in my opinion a bit of exaggeration in two directions. On the side of Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon, it lets the status that discovery enjoys with them relative to invention appear too

unfavourable: they too placed the greater value on the former. But for modern socialism it proclaims a freedom for invention that in my assessment it neither has nor can have. The socialism argued for by Marx and Engels distinguishes itself from the systems of Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier through a *different evaluation of the forces and means* of bringing about socialist society, and it does not need to be explained at any greater length why it therein represents a highly significant advance relative to them. But as a theory it is still not simply the science of recognising such forces, but rather even with it a certain inventiveness can still be recognised, if not about the means themselves, but still in the *forms* and *methods* of their application. Here is not the place to show this in detail; I can only express it as my conviction that the difference between Marx and his aforenamed precursors in this respect is more one of *degree* than of a wholly opposite perspective.[26]

Yet let us take up again the thread of our argument.

Socialism as a fighting movement cannot, I remarked, confront science fully without any tendency. This lies in the nature of the matter, since its first purpose is not to realise postulates of science. But in recognising the value of scientific insight into the factors and laws of development, it seeks in its choice of means and methods to rely on it, and calculate its respective purposes on its basis. That is in Social Democracy a generally acknowledged principle. The question is merely whether and inhowfar the character of a political campaigning party leaves socialism that level of theoretical unbiasedness that is the precondition for true scientificity. And the answer to this is that the degree of such unbiasedness depends on the clarity of the boundary relationship that exists between science as objective insight and the programmes and theories of political parties.

The British statesman and philosopher *Bacon* says in one of his essays that the difference between the affairs of state and the sciences is that in the latter nothing but change and movement is appropriate, but the former should have authority and prestige as their buttress. Bacon, as the advocate of absolutist monarchy, understood authority in a sense that cannot come into question for us. Also it will not be examined here what is desirable on this point regarding the respective state institutions in the narrower sense of this word. But if we keep to things as they *actually* are, and if we put in place of the affairs of state political parties, which after all under today's conditions fall thoroughly within the wider concept of the state's affairs and perform important functions within the social body, then in principle Bacon's contrast also applies today.[27] Even more than the modern state, parties are of an authoritarian nature, to express myself in

this way. They represent certain principles and demands, which they seek to bring to realisation, and in order for them to be able to represent them with the appropriate energy, they must in the given moment demand of their members that they pledge themselves to them without reservation. I completely recognise this, even if I also consider it to be an exaggeration to use in relation to this expressions like the unshakeableness of Islam, or, as a socialist organ once did now over thirty years ago, to demand for the theory it represented the same *infallibility* that the Catholic Church ascribes to the Pope. We are long since beyond things like this. It is not a matter of any coercion by faith or conscience. It is only a matter of acknowledging the resolutions of the party as binding for the political conduct of its members and of their championing the demands and principles it has declared to be fundamental—two conditions without which a vibrant party life cannot exist in the long term.[28] As far as this goes, one will have to grant every party the right to a certain intolerance. But precisely because I argue in favour of this right, I consider it necessary to have a sharp demarcation between the domains of party and science. And this requires above all an agreement about what we have to understand under science.

Science is, if we define the concept strictly, simply systematically-ordered knowledge. Knowledge means insight into the true constitution and relations of things, and since, depending on the state of this insight, there can only ever be *one* truth, there can in every domain of knowledge only ever be one science. Regarding the so-called exact sciences, this is generally acknowledged. Today, it will not occur to anyone to speak of liberal physics, of socialist mathematics, of conservative chemistry, etc. But do things stand differently with the science of human history and human institutions? I cannot admit this, and I consider a liberal, conservative, or socialist social science to be a nonsense. Where one meets any appearance of the same, one will on closer inspection always find that it is a matter of the ignoring or underestimation of the difference that exists between scientifically-formulated theories or doctrines and science itself, that a theory or doctrine for that reason is described as science because its construction formally conforms to the demands of scientific reasoning. But scientific form does not yet make a doctrinal system into a science if its preconditions and purposes contain moments that lie beyond insight free of any tendencies. But precisely this is the case in the rule with social-political theories, and always with social-political doctrines.[29]

Social and political doctrines are distinguished *inter alia* from the relevant sciences by the fact that they are closed off precisely where these

remain open. They lie under the dictate of certain purposes, in which it is not a matter of insight but rather about *volition*, and which lend them, even if in certain points they leave space open for new insights, a *finished* and *permanent* character. But scientific sociology is never closed off, because its object, society, is a living organism and because, regarding the laws that apply for this organism, it knows no final truths in the last instance. Self-evidently, the sciences too have their firm accomplishments. The proposition of continual change is not to be understood as if the sciences did not demand full consideration for all their established experiences and statements of insight, and permitted any arbitrariness in their mode of reasoning. On the contrary, they are unrelentingly strict, since their task consists in ascertaining what is necessary in accordance with these laws.[30] But with regard to the final causes of the phenomena and events they study and the final results of the developments they establish they are agnostic. They recognise no final conclusion in their doctrinal system, but rather hold it open for continuous extension and correction by new facts. For them, there is no other predominant purpose other than insight.[31]

In this vein, Proudhon, who undoubtedly had the honest wish to give socialism a scientific foundation, wrote in the same letter to Marx in which he announced to him the work that Marx so harshly criticised in his famous piece *The Poverty of Philosophy* (here I am giving a more extensive extract than in the meeting):

> Let us seek together, if you wish, the laws of society, the manner in which these laws are realized, the process by which we shall succeed in discovering them; but, for God's sake, after having demolished all the *a priori* dogmatisms, do not let us in our turn dream of indoctrinating the people … let us never regard a question as exhausted, and when we have used our last argument, let us *begin again*, if need be, with eloquence and irony.[32]

"*Let us never regard a question as exhausted*"—that would indeed be a fitting motto for socialism, insofar as it can and wishes to be scientific. That it is not and cannot be simply a science, or purely a science, I believe I have shown in the above. Already the concept as it is expressed in the word rules this out. No 'ism' is a science. What we describe with 'isms' are ways of regarding things, tendencies, systems of ideas or demands, but not sciences. The cornerstone of every true science is experience, it builds on accumulated knowledge. But socialism is the theory of a societal order *yet*

to come, and for that reason precisely what is most characteristic in it withdraws itself from strictly scientific establishment.

Yet there exists nonetheless an intimate relationship between socialism, as Social Democracy represents it, and science. Socialism derives its justification to an ever greater extent from its arsenal. Of all societal factions it lies closest to it, since as the movement of a rising class it is freer in its critique of what is than every other party or movement, and freedom of criticism is one of the fundamental conditions of scientific insight. Society is a living, self-developing organism, and the party or class that has the most to hope for from the progress whose direction we see before us is naturally also more interested than every other in the progress of this insight.

This interest exists for Social Democracy or socialism already because insight into societal contexts ensures that it finds those means that are best suited to speeding up societal progress, as well as avoiding those means that would halt it or slow it down. Although socialism is, as previously outlined, always to a certain degree a matter of *will*, it is *no matter of arbitrary caprice*. To reach its *willed* goal, it requires the science of the forces and contexts of the societal organism, of cause and effect in societal life as its leading guide.

The name scientific socialism, however, gives the misleading impression that socialism as a theory wants or is supposed to be a pure science. This notion is not only misguided, it also bears a not insignificant danger for socialism. For it is very apt to rob it of precisely what is one of the loftiest conditions of scientific judgment: *scientific unbiasedness*. Every proposition in the given doctrinal system of socialism is then held to be an irreplaceable link in the chain of socialist argumentation in the form it has once received, and in light of the connection that precisely socialism seeks to maintain between theory and practice, this can under some circumstances also detrimentally influence practice.[33] For this reason, I would prefer instead of the description scientific socialism one that at the same time sufficiently communicates the idea that socialism builds on the foundation of scientific insight and acknowledges this as the element that gives it direction, yet still avoids the perception that it raises or recognises the claim to be exclusively a science, and as such to be completed at some point in time. This dual need is best met in my view by the term critical socialism [*kritischer Sozialismus*]—critique understood in the sense of Kant's scientific criticism [*wissenschaftlicher Kritizismus*].

In articulating this, I want to add straightaway that I am in no way the only socialist who gives preference to this description, nor can I claim to have been the first to formulate it. This honour is due far more to a man who likewise belongs to the Marxist school, yet who in various points harbours other views than I do. I am referring to Professor *Antonio Labriola* of Rome. Already in 1896, Labriola explained in a piece dedicated to the memory of the *Communist Manifesto* that not the epithet scientific, which is frequently used in a quite thoughtless way, but rather the name critical is the most suitable description for Marxian communism.[34]

It is not whimsy, not verbal cherry-picking, but rather precisely the wish to endow socialist theory with as high a degree of scientificity as possible that leads to this objection to the label scientific. It is a matter of preventing a false interpretation of the relationship between science and socialism. By contrast, the name scientific socialism retains its full justification for me when the concept "scientific" in it is defined precisely in its critical sense, as a *postulate* and *programme*—as a demand that socialism makes of itself, and which conveys the idea that for what it wants the scientific method and insight have directive force.

Science is without tendencies, as insight into facts it belongs to no party or class. Socialism, by contrast, *is* a tendency, and as the doctrine of a party struggling for something new it cannot merely bind itself to what has already been established. But because the goal it strives towards lies on the trajectory of societal development, as scientific enquiry reveals the driving forces in modern society, socialist theory can, more than any other, satisfy the requirements of scientificity, and the party of socialism, Social Democracy, can, more than any other, place its goals and demands in harmony with the theories and requirements of the sciences that come into question for it. I can summarise my ideas in these words: There is as much scientific socialism *possible* as it is *necessary*, i.e., as one can reasonably demand of the theory of a movement that wants to create something fundamentally new.

* * *

Addendum I

Here some passages from the quoted work by Graziadei:

> But then, on somewhat closer examination, it will not be difficult to grasp that, if the theory of surplus labour stands on solid footing, surplus value remains nonetheless. If the cause of profit, surplus labour, remains, so too its effects will remain, the products, of which precisely profit consists. The fall of the theory of value of classical socialism cannot remove from the world a fact that is independent of it…
>
> Put briefly, we see that the phenomena with which we have to concern ourselves line up in this logical sequence: first comes labour, of which a part, accepting Marx's critique, becomes surplus labour; then we have the products, of which the part that stems from surplus labour forms profit; and finally the products transform into values, and the part of them that was attained without any outlay into surplus value. The value is thus of the three facts the most superficial, the most derivative. At a given historical moment, a social quality of the products, it nonetheless has the products as a precondition. To believe that the problem of the origin of profit, that is, the origin of the products that form profit, coincides with the problem of value, is tantamount to the view that one could explain in chemistry the formation of simple bodies from the derivatives that stem from them…[35]

> In the face of this very skilful attack (by anti-socialist economists against the labour theory of value), the majority of Marxists has displayed a truly unbelievable short-sightedness, but one that is only too likely in all students of great masters. Instead of accepting what is right in the arguments of their opponents, namely the disproof of their theory of value, but at the same time showing that the fundamental truths of their own doctrine, precisely because they are fundamental, are independent of this or that theory, they have got wound up in the scholastic *aut sint ut sunt*, and by defending with redoubled fanaticism even the mistaken part of their doctrine further confirmed the alleged significance of this theory of value, on which their opponents precisely rested their attacks.[36]

This is not the place to go in more detail into Graziadei's theory. That on the one point that is at stake here—the irrelevance of theories of value for the proof of surplus labour—hold the same point of view as Graziadei, the following passage from the work *The Preconditions of Socialism* may show, which came out at the same time as Graziadei's work:

> The surplus labour of the productively active part of the nation is an empirical fact demonstrable from *experience* and requiring no deductive proof. *Whether or not Marx's theory of value is correct has no bearing whatsoever on the demonstration of surplus labour. It is in this respect not a demonstrative argument but merely a means of analysis and illustration.*[37]

A harsh frontal assault against the entire previous value theory in economics, described by him as "the so-called theory of value", is carried out by Dr. Friedr. Gottl in his work *The Idea of Value*, which appeared in 1897.[38] A proof that comes off somewhat sweeping, but one that is still highly delightful to read, that *value*—as a singular object—is a metaphysical *a priori* notion and disguises a dogma that still awaits critical dissolution. This very keen-minded treatise sometimes reads like a satire. The author has a waggish sense of humour.

Incidentally, things go similarly with almost all the propositions described here as partial truths as with the theory of value. These are statements that have real facts as their foundation, but have received an imprecise formulation or an exaggerated interpretation. With the establishment of this latter circumstance, it is self-evidently only the formulas or their interpretations that fall *but not the facts themselves.*

I stressed this in the meeting in an explicatory parenthetical remark at the relevant point, which is why I am catching up on it here.

Addendum II

The expression cooperativity [*Genossenschaftlichkeit*] was interpreted by several of those listening to the lecture as if it was referring to the *form* of the realisation of socialism, while in fact—and I hope that the readers of this essay will note this without further ado—it is only supposed to signify the *legal principle* that is at stake in socialism: *democracy.* The *socius* is the participant endowed with equal rights [*gleichberechtigter Teilhaber*].

I emphasised this expressly in the debate in response to a comment by Professor Wagner, and added that, where the question of societal organisation is concerned, I am in no way an adherent of the idea of dissolving society into a whole lot of free cooperatives. The so-called coercive cooperatives [*Zwangsgenossenschaften*], the state and local communities, retained in my view their great tasks for all the foreseeable future too. How the division of societal tasks between them and the free cooperatives would take shape, that is in every given moment a matter of their development and recognised expediency, and the same applies to how much economic work is left freely up to individual activity.

I am observing this because, according to an article in the *Welt* on Monday 20 May about my lecture, it can seem as if *prima facie* I want free cooperatives and am merely approving a few social functions for the state and local communities almost by-the-bye. That is not at all my point of view. In general, the article in question is not a report about my lecture, but rather a very one-sided *resumé*, interspersed with the personal

reflections of the editor of the named paper, with whom I am personally entirely unacquainted.

Addendum III

Fourier's table of the course of development of human societies evinces great insight into the conditions of historical development. His description of the societal state that will follow "civilisation", as Fourier calls the phase of development reached in the advanced countries, as the *period of guarantism*—translated by Stein not unfairly as the period of guaranties [*Gewährschaften*]—has received a curious confirmation by the course that actual development has taken in the meantime. The entirety of modern social reform, voluntary as well as public, presents itself as a system of guarantees [*Gewährleistungen*]—insurances [*Versicherungen*]—against all possible manner of hazards and impairments of existence. Even if Fourier describes the then still generally assumed paradisical original state of humanity—"Edenism"—as the "shadow of joy", he thereby shows himself to be a very realistic psychologist. And his often so very madcap depictions of future developments prove themselves on closer inspection to be the outcome of a conception of nature and the world that comes uncommonly close to the modern theory of development.

Owen, who had preoccupied himself very extensively with the mechanical natural sciences, exaggerated his theory of the dependency of the human character on their surroundings in the same way. He says that, already as a young man in Manchester, when he was intimately acquainted with the then also still young John Dalton, who later won world renown as the founder of atomic theory in chemistry, and held regular meetings with him and some other friends, at which they debated philosophical and scientific problems, and where Dalton was already developing the basic ideas of his atomic theory, he himself was given the nickname *the reasoning machine*, because he branded human beings as mere machines that had been educated by nature and society to become reasoning machines.[39] Some time later, in the literary and philosophical society in Manchester, he declared the world to be a great laboratory, and human beings to be mere chemical connections composite in nature, and thereupon received the title: the philosopher who wants to produce humans in a chemical way.

This radically atomistic standpoint also plays into Owen's social theory. His repeated assertion that human beings can be endowed with "any and

every character desired" through the suitable means overlooks or underestimates the significance of the organic principle. In this, Fourier, although he too started out from a physical principle—Newton's theory of gravity—was ahead of Owen. With him, the stress already lies more on *becoming* than on *creating*. He does not want to mould human beings themselves, but rather through suitable organisations bring their inclinations and passions to harmonic unfolding and activation. He is substantially aesthically-minded, while Owen is purely utilitarian.

Addendum IV

The fact that scientificity rules out any arbitrariness in one's mode of reasoning, and that it is the task of all science to ascertain what is necessary in accordance with certain laws in the phenomena of their domain of enquiry, leads on to the inference that the concept of scientific socialism implies or demands the strictly logical proof of the lawlike necessity of socialism. That is also how the question has been repeatedly been posed. Socialists have claimed that the proof of the immanent necessity of socialism has been provided by scientific socialism; anyone who disputes this is thereby throwing scientific socialism to the dogs.

From what follows in the text, one will see that I now certainly do not consider this proof to have been provided, and its provision to also be neither possible nor necessary. However, since in the lecture I restricted myself to conceptual exposition, but because this, like all conceptual expositions, it can easily be exaggerated in its interpretation, I will also add the following here:

Prima facie it must be firmly remembered that in the whole of this question it is a matter of a *boundary determination*. Socialism is itself a very ambiguous concept, and the same applies to the concept of *immanent necessity*. It is claimed by some people that socialism can or must be proven to be an immanent *economic* necessity. But it can easily be shown that such a request or starting-point is untenable precisely from the scientific standpoint, because economics cannot prove anything that lies outside its domain, but socialism never merges with economics without remainders. On the contrary, if on the basis of this insight one gives the concept of immanent necessity the interpretation of a *social* or generally *historical* necessity, then one makes a remainderless scientific line of reasoning all the more impossible, because then the subjective factors that are to be taken into account do not permit a compelling formulaic proof.

Human beings are not automatons. Either way, the proof of the immanent necessity of socialism is impossible without the aid of transcendental deductions, and with that the request for providing a scientific proof without remainders for it is *unjustified*, or rather to be rejected precisely from the standpoint of scientificity.

Now, it has been claimed that, if this is the case, socialist theory contains nothing or nothing more that compels anybody to join the socialist party. But this is itself again a quite transcendental conception of things. Firstly, even the knowledge that we humans *must* one day all die forces nobody to lay themselves down on their deathbed before their hour has come. Secondly, only the possibility of a total scientific *proof* of the immanent necessity of socialism has been called into question, not the possibility or probability of the fact itself. Rather, the factors of societal development that are amenable to scientific examination point in their entirety quite unmistakeably towards the development, constantly increasing in energy, of modern society towards socialism. The question is thus substantially the following: whether and how far resolute will [*Willensentschluss*] resting on insight into the greater justice and expediency of socialist institutions plays a self-creating role or not. But the moral compulsion to join the socialist party cannot lose from the fact that what has been recognised as necessary for social progress from the perspective of this purpose merely possesses a greater or lesser probability as part of a historically immanent necessity. On the contrary, this necessitation increases through the awareness that bringing about what is recognised to be just and expedient depends to a high degree on our *volition* and *activity*, and not merely on a necessity dictated by history.

In practice, it also never comes down to the proof, which in general is only ever to be provided in the abstract, of the immanent necessity of *socialism*—since concretely only proofs for the necessity of certain socialist measures can ever be provided—but rather to showing the desirability and possibility of a socialist societal order. Socialist agitation has hitherto always been directed towards demonstrating this, it draws from it its electioneering force, and is also only quite indirectly affected by the present question of *determining concepts*.[40]

Addendum V

There are examples in the history of the socialist parties of all countries for the fact that mistaken theoretical propositions detrimentally influenced the practice of Social Democracy. This is also generally admitted by earlier socialist theories, but the history of modern socialism is also not free from this. Thus Friedrich Engels in his time reproached North American and English socialists for having made Marxism into a sectlike dogma, and only a few years ago—1897—Karl Kautsky accused the English Marxist Bax of "utopian Marxism".[41]

I will satisfy myself with this summary indication. Just as already in the lecture itself, with a view to the audience before which it was being held, I deliberately restricted myself to only making brief verbal references to controversial questions that still now play a greater role in Social Democracy, but refrained from any partisan taking-of-sides, so here too I am restricting myself purely to matters of principle.

It is a matter of avoiding two extremes: unprincipled, crudely empiricist experimentationalism, and sectarian doctrinairism. No theory gives an infallible means against infractions in practice, it can only be a matter of ruling out those infractions that are results of a deficiency in theoretical insight or of incorrect theory. And this ruling-out is achieved as far as possible by conceiving theory as an object of living, continually *evolving* science. Accordingly, socialist programmes may in their theoretical part, which after all is supposed to be the expression of scientific insight, never be too detailed. Since one does not write new programmes every year, but the factual movement never stands still and insight always grows, there is otherwise always the danger of an inherent contradiction between programme and practice on the one hand, and programme and acquired insight on the other. The former leads to disruptive frictions, the latter to unprincipled scepticism. So the question discussed here, although in the first instance it is only one of conceptual definition, is obliquely also a question of practical significance. It is quite wrong-headed to argue, following the *Welt* on Monday, that, if one limits the concept of scientific socialism in the sense outlined here, one robs the workers of their belief in the scientificity of socialism. On the contrary, through this conceptual delimitation—one could here also use the favoured expression "clean break"—one gives those who have lost this belief precisely the possibility of regaining it, and laying it on a firmer basis than it has ever had.

Notes

1. Present volume, pp. 345–54.
2. Ibid., pp. 513–42.
3. Adolph Wagner (1835–1917), German financial economist and pro-monarchist advocate of state socialism, representative of the "socialism of the chair" tendency, formulator of "Wagner's law" of the increase of state spending in line with income growth, influenced figures as diverse as W.E.B. Du Bois, Wolfgang Heine, Gustav Stresemann, Werner Sombart, and Ferdinand Tönnies.
4. Eduard Bernstein, 'Masaryks Kritik des Marxismus', *Zeit* 250 (15 July 1899), p. 38.
5. Friedrich Engels, 'Anti-Dühring', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 25: Engels* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), pp. 5–309; Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–1883* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), pp. 281–325.
6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Marx—Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 79.
7. Paul Brousse (1844–1912), French doctor and socialist activist, ally of Peter Kropotkin before the split in the International Workingmen's Association, later a reformist and possibilist voice in favour of unification between Jules Guesde's and Jean Jaurès' strands of French socialism into the SFIO.
8. Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', p. 305.
9. Friedrich Engels, 'Marx and Rodbertus: Preface to the First German Edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy* by Karl Marx', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 26: Engels 1882–1889* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p. 281.
10. Ibid., pp. 281–2.
11. [Ed. B.—This is the following bit from the work *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "If the exchange value of a product equals the labour time contained in the product, then the exchange value of a working day is equal to the product it yields, in other words, wages must be equal to the product of labour. But in fact the opposite is true." And the following note on this: "This objection, which was advanced against Ricardo by bourgeois economists, was later taken up by socialists. Assuming that the formula was theoretically sound, they alleged that practice stood in conflict with the theory and demanded that bourgeois society should draw the practical conclusions supposedly arising from its theoretical principles. In this way at least English socialists turned Ricardo's formula of exchange value against political economy."] MECW 29, p. 301.

12. Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–1883* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 84.
13. Engels, 'Marx and Rodbertus', p. 282.
14. [Ed. B.—For these, surplus value falls into the category of *rent*, specifically, it constitutes in its various subdivisions every time one of the various special forms of the aggregate concept of rent, which encompasses all income that flows from property, exclusive rights, preferential positions, etc. It is obvious that one can, in principle, reach exactly the same stance in challenging the appropriation of surplus value by capitalists and monopolists via this way of looking at things, as on the basis of the Marxian theory of surplus value. It is not so much the question of whether it is right and the other is wrong—since at their core they are only two different ways of developing the same fundamental idea—but rather which of them has the benefit of greater unity and conceptual acuity. A question that itself again is only of practical importance once social development has reached an advanced stage.]
15. [Ed. B.—See Addendum I.] Antonio Graziadei (1873–1953), Italian economist and "maximalist" socialist politician, co-founder of the Communist Party of Italy [*Partito Comunista d'Italia*], accused of revisionism for seeking to correct perceived mistakes in the Marxian labour theory of value.
16. [Ed. B.—Kant's answer to the second question is, as is well known, that metaphysics as a science is only possible precisely as a critique of pure reason—i.e., reason that precedes experience and first enables it—as we put it today, as *critique of knowledge* [*Erkenntniskritik*]. "So critique contains, and it alone, the entire well-examined and proven plan, indeed even all the means of completion within itself, by which metaphysics as a science can be brought about; it is not possible to do so by other means and ways." Now, as much as Kant has been corrected in the individual details of his critique of reason by modern evolutionary theory, his principled discussion about its foundations and significant still remains unshaken.] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, Gary Hatfield (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
17. [Ed. B.—See Addendum II.]
18. [Ed. B.—In the essay from which I took a passage as an epigraph for this work, the English cultural historian Thomas Buckle enumerates a series of epoch-making discoveries that were made substantially deductively, through the imaginative power of poetically-disposed minds. He writes, *inter alia*: "The discovery—the metamorphosis of plants—was made by Göthe, the greatest poet Germany has produced, and one of the greatest the world has ever seen. And he made it, not *in spite of* being a poet, but *because* he was a poet." And: "I submit that there is a spiritual, a poetic, and for aught we

know a spontaneous and uncaused element in the human mind, which ever and anon, suddenly and without warning, gives us a glimpse and a forecast of the future, and urges us to seize truth as it were by anticipation." He hopes "that I have not altogether raised my voice in vain before this great assembly, and that I have done at least something towards vindicating the use in physical science of that deductive method which, during the last two centuries, Englishmen have unwisely despised". Naturally he in no way thereby repudiates the inductive method, but only what Engels calls in his preface to the second edition of *Anti-Dühring* the "blinkered way of thinking" inherited from English empiricism. But here too there is a limit. And so let the old master Kant be a warning counsellor to us. "The imagination may perhaps be forgiven for occasional vagaries, and for not keeping carefully within the limits of experience, since it gains life and vigour by such flights, and since it is always easier to moderate its boldness, than to stimulate its languor. But the understanding which ought to *think* can never be forgiven for indulging in *vagaries*; for we depend upon it alone for assistance to set bounds, when necessary, to the vagaries of the imagination." (*Prolegomena*, §35.)] Henry Thomas Buckle, 'The Influence of Women on the Progress of Knowledge', in Henry Thomas Buckle, Essays(Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1867).

19. [Ed. B.—If one takes into consideration, e.g., the low intellectual and moral level of the English working class, and the nature of the political parties in England at the time into which Owen's primary activity falls, then one will also grasp why Owen avoided party politics and the political action relating to it, and called upon the well-minded elements of all classes and parties to participate in the work of societal reform. But the withdrawal from party politics in no way meant for Owen a fundamental aversion to political reforms and legislative measures to benefit the working class. He was, as Marx and Engels have already emphasised, one of the first and most assiduous agitators for workers' protection laws, and took part in many agitations and demonstrations for the workers' latest demands.]
20. [Ed. B.—*Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System*. Owen writes there: "Hitherto, legislators have appeared to regard manufactures only in one point of view, as a source of national wealth. The other mighty consequences, which proceed from extended manufactures, *when left to their natural progress*, have never yet engaged the attention of any legislature. Yet the political and moral effects to which we allude, well deserve to occupy the best faculties of the greatest and the wisest statesmen. The general diffusion of manufactures throughout a country generates *a new character* in its inhabitants."] Robert Owen, *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817).

21. [Ed. B.—Thompson, Bray, Hodgskin, etc.] Thomas Hodgskin (1787–1869), English political economist, socialist critic of capitalism influenced by neoclassical economics, defender of free trade as well as trade unionism.
22. [Ed. B.—Compare Addendum III.]
23. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), French positivist philosopher, pioneering advocate of applying scientific methods to address social questions, early evolutionary sociologist who influenced thinkers as diverse as Émile Durkheim, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, Karl Marx, and Herbert Spencer.
24. [Ed. B.—In agreement with this, the Saint-Simonians already unfurled a lively propaganda among the workers early on. This *inter alia* in the strongly-industrialised Lyon. The great weavers' uprising there in November 1831 had been almost immediately preceded by a Saint-Simonian agitation, and representatives of this tendency sat on the workers' committee. The first attempts to found workers' cooperatives also came from students of Saint-Simon.]
25. Engels, 'Anti-Dühring', p. 255.
26. [Ed. B.—One could say of Owen, Fourier, and if not of Saint-Simon himself then still of several of his students that, as already indicated above with respect to Owen, what brands them above all as utopians in the worse sense of the word was the *inexpediency* of their means, which aimed to bring about the socialist society they aspired to, the *incongruity* that exists on this point with them between *purpose*, or rather *goal*, and *means*. Engels also explains this in *Anti-Dühring*. And at the same time in their defence he sets out in a trenchant way that the inadequacy of their means was conditioned by the insufficient level of the societal development that these men saw before them. But I cannot agree with him if on page 4 of *Anti-Dühring* he says about them that they regarded it as a coincidence, independent of historical development, when and where the truths were found that they revealed to the world. In such a generalised form, this gives an erroneous picture of their conception of history.]
27. [Ed. B.—Bacon himself uses the expression *civil affairs*, which encompasses state and society, since in his day after all there was no societal science [*Gesellschaftswissenschaft*] that was separate from political science [*Staatswissenschaft*] whatsoever.]
28. [Ed. B.—It is self-evident that in practice this norm can be interpreted in very different ways. But a party that does not want to sink to the level of a sect, or—since parties often start out as sects—remain stuck at the standpoint of one, will not fundamentally make too narrow-minded a use of this concept; a party that does not want to be a mere agglomeration of elements that think differently on most points will not restrict it to pure for-

malities. *Est modus in rebus*—I presuppose, in speaking of political parties, an understanding for their nature and normal conditions of existence.]

29. [Ed. B.—A societal doctrine formulated from a politically-conservative standpoint can, e.g., be a very uniformly thought-through, strictly logically-constructed theoretical edifice, yet with that it will still not yet become a sociological science, but behaves towards this as perhaps does a vegetarian recipe book towards the physiology of taste and nutrition. This, self-evidently, is not to condemn outright the existence of such doctrines and recipe books.]
30. [Ed. B.—Compare Addendum IV.]
31. [Ed. B.—To the objection, raised in the meeting by a speaker, which I have also encountered elsewhere, that this could not be true, since after all, e.g., medicine, which is surely a science, has the purpose of healing, I had and have to answer that healing is the task of an *art* [*Kunst*], of practised medicine, which certainly has as its precondition a thorough mastery of medical science. But this itself does not have healing, but rather *the insight into the conditions and means of healing as its task*. If one takes this conceptual distinction as a typical model, then one will be able to establish even with more complicated examples without difficulty where science ends and art or doctrine begins.]
32. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'A M. Marx, 17 mai', in Amédée-Jérôme Langlois (ed.), *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon, vol. 2* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875), pp. 198–202.
33. [Ed. B.—Compare Addendum V.]
34. [Ed. B.—"*Critical communism*—that is its true name, and there is none more fitting for this doctrine." *In memoriam for the Communist Manifesto: Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*. I. Rome 1896. Labriola is, as his philosophical treatises show, as a philosopher more a Hegelian than a Kantian.]
35. Antonio Graziadei, *La Produzione Capitalistica* (Turin: Bocca, 1899), pp. 6–7.
36. Ibid., p. 245.
37. Eduard Bernstein, *Preconditions of Socialism*, Henry Tudor (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 52.
38. Friedrich von Gottl-Ottlilienfeld, *Der Wertgedanke, ein verhülltes Dogma der Nationalökonomie* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1899).
39. John Dalton (1766–1844), English naturalist and educator, seminal theorist in meterology, colour-blindness, and the laws of gases, acknowledged as the founder of atomic theory and modern chemistry.

40. [Ed. B.—Compare also Addendum V.]
41. Ernest Belfort Bax (1854–1926), English lawyer, journalist, philosopher, and historian, central member of both the Social Democratic Federation alongside Henry Mayers Hyndman and the Socialist League with William Morris, editor of *Justice* (1887–1891), early theorist of British Marxism who supported Karl Kautsky in his debates with Bernstein, vitriolic anti-feminist and men's rights advocate.

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CHAPTER 15

What is Socialism?

This address was held by me on 28 December 1918 in the Great Hall of the *Philharmonie* in Berlin in front of an uncommonly numerous mixed audience. The organiser was one Association for Civic and Economic Education [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Staatsbürgerliche und Wirtschaftliche Bildung*], which in the first, febrile days of the German Republic took an interest in widely elucidating its tasks and possibilities. At its instigation, the address was recorded stenographically, and distributed as a pamphlet with quite a high circulation. This pamphlet, which was regrettably printed based on the uncorrected stenograph, has already been out of print for some time. But since again and again enquiries have been made after it, I have now carefully looked through it, and so I am once again putting it out onto the book market, divided into chapters to give a better overview. My perusal only concerned its style. Factually I have left it unchanged, since I am conscious that it is a piece from the first, hopeful months of the Revolution, which on account of the tone that pervades it might, in its own way, also be regarded as a historical document.

Berlin-Schöneberg, February 1922.

Eduard Bernstein.

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I. The Emergence and Transformations of the Concept of Socialism

All the world is speaking and writing about socialism today. Indeed, everybody also has some notion or other of what socialism may be. But if one asks individual personalities what they imagine by socialism, we will receive really quite far-diverging answers. Not just from ordinary people from among the population, but also from educated, well-read personalities, even from experts. In textbooks too we are almost uniformly given divergent answers. On one occasion, when I had to speak about socialism in front of socialists, I had a series of listeners write down on a piece of paper beforehand a short explanation of what they understand by socialism, and from these 50 people I got back 50 different answers. Certainly, these differences were not absolute. There was no complete contradiction between them. The explanations only differed from one another because their authors viewed the object under various different aspects and from several different sides, and one held this side, the other that side to be the decisive, most important, or most comprehensive one.

With such answers, one only acquires partial pictures of what socialism is. A partial piece is identified more or less correctly, but the matter itself is not exhausted. Some understand under socialism an imaginary state of affairs, while others think of a movement, a development, yet others of a policy, or rather a political system, and others further think of a theory or an insight. Many also connect the concept of socialism with the concept of communism, and describe socialism as a weakened form or preliminary stage of communism, which is supposed to be its consummation, so to speak, the completed state of communality [*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*].

In light of these various explanations, which of them should one now abide by? If one wants to tangibly visualise the differences between them, then the definitions of socialism in two well-known lexicographical works give us a picture of this. In the *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, one finds socialism defined in the wider sense as a "synoptic summary of all endeavours that aim to remove the class distinctions that prevail within society", and in a narrower modern sense as that economic system—here one has the word "system", where there it gave the word "endeavours"—that "wants to subject economic life to a common planned regulation by replacing private property with common property".[1]

By comparison, in the large *Handbook of the Social Sciences*, one finds socialism defined as a "societal state of affairs in which to a wide extent the

economy is managed with the means of the entire community on the basis of collective property." Here we have a state of affairs, there we had a system, and besides that also endeavours, so three different ways of looking at the matter.

Once again, which of them should one abide by?

If we cast a brief glance over the history of socialism, we discover that the term itself, the concept of socialism, is not yet very old at all. For in the history of humanity, 80 or 90 years is after all a very young age. The word socialism namely appears for the first time in the middle of the 1830s. Some say in England, in the school of the noble social reformer Robert Owen, others say in France in the circle of the great social reformer Saint-Simon. As social reformers, Robert Owen and his school, and likewise Saint-Simon and his school, were more or less radical in their proposals. But they were not communists, but rather opponents of communism, and above all they were opponents of class struggle. They were ethicists and harmonisers, i.e., they justified their theories as well as their practical proposals and demands on the basis of ethical fundamental principles.

But hardly had this word socialism, which is derived grammatically from *societas* = society [*Gesellschaft*], entered the literature than it soon also came into fashion and found its application in association with all possible manner of things, in all kinds of modified variants. Louis Reybaud, the first significant historian of socialism, called his work, which appeared at the end of the 1830s, *Study on the Reformers or Modern Socialists*, and in it lists a series of socialist systems, which increase in number still further in subsequent editions.[2] France in particular in the 1830s and 1840s has a surfeit of often very interesting attempts to intellectually construct new forms of socialism. Yet the economy of this lecture prevents me from going into these and similar works by English authors, etc., in detail.

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in winter 1847–1848, one already finds criticised a whole series of perverted forms of socialism; here, feudal socialism, conservative socialism, bourgeois socialism, petty-bourgeois socialism, and utopian socialism are criticised—the most varied socialisms are critically illuminated in this *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. One sees that socialism had already found quite different, widely-divergent conceptual applications.

In 1848, in the Year of Revolutions, the concept of socialism forces its way into politics, and decorates the names of political parties. In France, supporters of the radical republic of a socialistic tint call themselves

démocrats socialistes—socialist democrats—and afterwards in Germany, the democratic poet Gottfried Kinkel, who is probably known only by name to most people anymore, came up with the expression "social democrat". Here this term crops up for the first time.

In 1850 in England arises a school of reformers who call themselves Christian socialists, the school of Frederic Denison Maurice and the poet Kingsley, two men who sacrificed a great deal and quite disinterestedly, in no way for any class, worked towards socialism and in doing so believed they could appeal to Christianity.

Then in 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle came on the scene in Germany. A new workers' movement is taking shape, and initially campaigns for the democratic franchise and for state-financed producer cooperatives. Lassalle comes to speak about socialism in one of his speeches, and declares that if one calls what he and his followers wanted socialism, then fine, they would indeed be socialists. And a socialist he was too. After Lassalle's death, the new movement founded a paper with the title *Der Sozialdemokrat*, and the movement from then on calls itself the social-democratic movement.

Nine years later, in 1872, there emerges in Eisenach an association of representatives of the science of political economy [*Nationalökonomie*] that is given the name "socialists of the chair" [*Kathedersozialisten*]. These socialists at their lecterns mostly stayed far removed from political struggle. In the middle of the 1870s, the expression "social-conservative" emerges, and Catholic social reformers and Protestant agitators of a conservative partisan tendency then call themselves "Christian-social". A radical strand of Protestant socialists in the final decade of the nineteenth century takes on the name "national-social". In this way, the term socialism in its various associations already has an entire history behind it.

It would lead us too far away from our topic if I were to elaborate on how the various parties or schools I have named now applied socialism and the social idea. We will do better to leave out these specialised details, and only to preoccupy ourselves with socialism as it is represented in Germany today by the great party whose members call themselves either simply socialists or social democrats.

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German Social Democracy honours the two great campaigners and thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as the acknowledged teachers and representatives of the aspirations and the theory of socialism. Of the two of

them, Friedrich Engels wrote a polemic in 1876/77 against Eugen Dühring, who defended his own form of socialism at the University of Berlin and had harshly attacked Marx. This work, of which individual chapters later appeared as a separate explanatory work, which one cannot recommend warmly enough even today, and which carries the title *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, gives the following definition of socialism in the introduction:

> Modern Socialism is, in its essence, the direct product of the recognition, on the one hand, of the class antagonisms, existing in the society of to-day, between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage-workers; on the other hand, of the anarchy existing in production. But, in its theoretical form, modern Socialism originally appears ostensibly as a more logical extension of the principles laid down by the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century.[3]

What stands out in this definition? Anybody who examines it more closely will say: but here any specific indication of the *content* of socialism itself is missing. It only says what *perspective* socialism stems from and as what it *appears*, but not what it truly *is*. An explanation like that, which presents socialism as a system, one will not in fact find in any of the writings of Friedrich Engels or Karl Marx. Why not? Did they have no definite conceptions of it, or of its nature? O, they most certainly had those, of that one can be sure. But they opposed any attempt to construct a *system* of socialism, they opposed any ready-made plan for socialism, so to speak. For them, socialism is a process of societal development that takes place under certain historical conditions. No plan, no schema, but rather a *movement*, which has as its material foundation today's capitalist mode of production—that is socialism according to them. And as its driving force this socialism has the class struggle of the proletariat, that is of the working class in modern capitalist society.

What is the characteristic feature of this modern capitalist society and its mode of production? This feature is that in capitalist society, production happens not in small workshops—naturally this does happen in exceptional cases, but not as a rule, and it is what is the rule that defines a societal state—but instead in large enterprises. The consumer goods of society, insofar as they are not products of agriculture, are produced in capitalist enterprises that are operated with capitalist means and in which labour is carried out in a more or less elaborate form already collectively,

or as Marx even says, *societally*. The persons active in a modern factory enterprise together already form a kind of community that is grouped differently in accordance with a highly-developed division of labour, but in which the personnel of the firm manufactures its products as a collective whole, I want to say societally. The only difference is that the management [*Leitung*] of the enterprise and the appropriation of its product is individual. Although today the net product is not always taken on by individual people, but rather often by groups of capitalists, even by joint-stock corporations with thousands upon thousands of shareholders, these act as a single unit vis-à-vis the workers and employees, and are completely different people than those who produce here.

This system, where on the one side are the producers, the workers—to whom are added ever more the commercial and technical employees—and on the other side the owners, the proprietors of capital, either private persons or groups of them, lie separated from one another, so that ownership of the means of production is completely separate from those who produce—this system has the result that from the labour of the producers a particular surplus value is created over and above the price of their labour power, and that a totally different class of society lives off this surplus value. And because this system is perceived [*empfunden*] as a system of exploitation, it leads again and again to constant, renewed revolts by workers and employees. A struggle arises over surplus value, which of necessity reappears again and again, and which plays out not only between capitalists and workers but also between capitalists themselves.

In the latter respect it is a matter of the competitive struggles of business-owners among one another. The one seeks to chase the others off the field by undercutting them, which in the long run is only possible by reducing the share of surplus value in the individual articles through improvements in the enterprise. The enterprise is increased in size, in order to implement the division of labour and specialisation on an ever larger basis. In this way, business-enterprises (factories and places of work of all kinds) grow, and with the growth of business-enterprises grows the workers' dependency on business-owners. One has seen that especially where we have the most modern form of capitalist production, namely capitalists joining forces into a syndicate or trust, and where hence, so long as the workers are not organised, a gigantic group of capitalists has command over many thousands of workers and can exert massive pressure on them. Further consequences of the competitive struggles between capitalists are crises and stagnations of commercial life. The means of production

grow over the heads of the producers. In modern capitalist society, production is in general production-in-advance, which ultimately grows so strongly that in the market a state of overproduction sets in, of commercial crisis followed by stagnation, which hitherto has had great misery as a consequence among the workers. On the side of the large syndicates, which already hold certain monopolies, several things have recently happened to weaken or shorten crises, but for all that the exploitation of the public by their monopoly predominates all the more.

This state of things, which is intensifying more and more, leads according to the theory of Marx and Engels ultimately to social breakdown. The entire capitalist system breaks down because of its internal contradictions. In the meantime, as a result of the constant expansion of capitalist business-enterprises, as a result of the culling and rolling-back of small and medium enterprises, the proletariat has gradually grown so strong that it seizes rulership, takes possession of the state and production, and transforms the whole of society in line with its demands. The new society that develops out of this is thereby the product of an economic development that has attained a certain level of maturity.

It is appropriate here to cite some passages from Engels' work itself, namely his concluding summary. Here, he outlines a whole series of stages of development. The stage outlined above he describes as follows:

> On the one hand, perfecting of machinery, made by competition compulsory for each individual manufacturer, and complemented by a constantly growing displacement of labourers. *Industrial reserve army.* On the other hand, unlimited extension of production, also compulsory under competition, for every manufacturer. On both sides, unheard of development of productive forces, excess of supply over demand, over-production, glutting of the markets, crises every ten years, the vicious circle: excess here, of means of production and products—excess there, of labourers, without employment and without means of existence. But these two levers of production and of social well-being are unable to work together, because the capitalist form of production prevents the productive forces from working and the products from circulating, unless they are first turned into capital—which their very superabundance prevents. The contradiction has grown into an absurdity. *The mode of production rises in rebellion against the form of exchange*. The bourgeoisie are convicted of incapacity further to manage their own social productive forces.[4]

Then begins a further stage, of which we have all experienced a part and in whose emergence we still lie:

> Partial recognition of the social character of the productive forces forced upon the capitalists themselves. Taking over of the great institutions for production and communication, first by joint-stock companies, later on by trusts, then by the State. The bourgeoisie demonstrated to be a superfluous class. All its social functions are now performed by salaried employees.[5]

And finally comes:

> *Proletarian Revolution*.—Solution of the contradictions. The proletariat seizes the public power, and by means of this transforms the socialised means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property. By this act, the proletariat frees the means of production from the character of capital they have thus far borne, and gives their socialised character complete freedom to work itself out. Socialised production upon a predetermined plan becomes henceforth possible. The development of production makes the existence of different classes of society thenceforth an anachronism. In proportion as anarchy in social production vanishes, the political authority of the State dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of social organisation, becomes at the same time the lord over Nature, his own master—free.[6]

II. Liberalism as the Preliminary Stage of Socialism

That is the development as Marx and Engels saw it. Now what, in the face of this development, is the task of socialists and their doctrine, the theory of socialism?

First: To precisely understand this development and its tendencies, and precisely investigate its individual details.

Second: To organise and politically educate the working class for the tasks that arise from this for it, the proletariat, and form a party of the proletariat. The political party of the proletariat, that is Social Democracy.

Third: To clear hurdles out of the path of this development. In Marx, it reads in his work *The Civil War in France* with respect to the Paris Commune of 1871:

> The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made Utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*. … They have […]

> but to set free elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant.[7]

And this setting-free of the societal elements, that means lifting all hurdles to development, that is the task of the proletariat, as it was for its time the task of the bourgeoisie that preceded the proletariat.

For the middle classes [*Bürgertum*]—in the sense of the French word *bourgeoisie*—have played a very revolutionary role in history. In the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, one reads in the first section passages that almost amount to a glorification of the historical role of the bourgeoisie. For this middle class was once the liberating class vis-à-vis feudalism, vis-à-vis guild burgherdom [*Zunftbürgertum*], etc. Over the course of time, it removed the hurdles lying in the way of its development, and set free the societal forces for its needs, for its mode of production, that is for free competition [*Konkurrenz*], for free business rivalry [*Wettbewerb*] on the domestic markets and later on the global market. In this, the middle class had a historical mission, which, when the *Communist Manifesto* was written—in 1847—was not yet fully accomplished, at least in Germany but also in other countries. With respect to this, Marx and Engels also derived the practical conclusion that socialists, who after all from a social perspective already saw themselves as enemies of the bourgeoisie and battled against them, still—it says this precisely in the *Communist Manifesto*—had to support the middle class for the time being wherever it appeared in a revolutionary capacity against the reactionary classes, that a temporary alignment between proletariat and bourgeoisie could not be ruled out.

Let us stay with our German word for "bourgeoisie", even though it is ambiguous. Our German word *Bürger* has two meanings after all. On the one hand, it means simply the member of a large community, which everyone is whether they are proletarian, bourgeois, aristocrat, or whatever else. On the other hand, however, it means the member of a certain societal *stratum*, namely the propertied classes who do not belong to the aristocracy by birth [*Geburtsaristokratie*]. Here, the *Bürger*, as soon as they feel themselves a member of their class, stands in opposition to the worker or to the proletariat. But let us—now it has established [*eingebürgert*] itself—stay with the term *Bürgertum*, when we take in view the class of the propertied capitalists. Now the bourgeoisie [*Bürgertum*] has, besides its economic and political advances, also carried out very significant forward strides in legal institutions and legal concepts, even in ethics as well. By

fighting against and removing estatist [*ständisch*] institutions, it at least in principle created the equality of all before the law, and as limited as that may seem today it was still an extraordinary improvement for the time. The modern bourgeoisie created, at least in principle, the recognition of the freedom of the personality, the freedom of action of the personality. And the proletariat needed that, we all need that today in order to feel at ease. That was a great advance for its time.

Liberalism—not conceived as a party, where after all it has ossified in various ways, and has in many cases become a slave to capitalism or has fallen under its sway—liberalism as a worldview was for its time something great, and has still not yet become superfluous at all today.

Liberalism's *Ideenwelt* as a worldview is laid down in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* of the great French Revolution, which proclaimed the freedom of the personality, the right to one's own freedom, and the right of every generation to its sovereignty. No generation can prescribe laws to the generation that follows it, it says in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. That is an extraordinarily revolutionary idea, which Ferdinand Lassalle further explained in his significant book *The System of Acquired Rights*, and in this revolutionary sense applied to modern conditions. For what does it mean: no generation can prescribe laws to one that follows it? That implies that no generation is bound to the conception of acquired rights as the resolutions of a preceding generation had devised it. One does not have to think for long to realise that this points to extraordinarily far-reaching consequences, especially with regard to the question of reparations, in particular of expropriation. For Lassalle's *System of Acquired Rights* is in fact a theory of the right of revolutionary expropriation, which ties to the assertion of this right the demand that even violent force should express an idea of right [*Rechtsgedanke*]. One can naturally say in the revolution: "Good, now we have power, and we can do what we want." Precisely here Ferdinand Lassalle shows that even revolutionary violence must and can leave space for an idea of right. He calls his work a reconciliation of positive right, i.e., of right laid down in laws, with the philosophy of right, i.e., with natural right, which proves when there must be compensation and when confiscation can straightforwardly take place.

We owe the development outlined here, the emancipation from guildship [*Zünftlertum*], from estatism [*Ständewesen*] and the like, and the establishment of the principle of the free personality to the bourgeoisie.

This development, which after all took centuries to assert itself, has often been presented to us in history as merely a battle over *ideas*. Its

substrate, the material struggles of interest that gave it its impetus, were little considered for a long time. The Reformation in the sixteenth century, this first—if I may put it like this—synoptic movement of the aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie, the great English and the great French Revolution—they show a development of ideas that has not yet been completed at all. For with ideas it goes like this: although they are originally called into existence by material events that take place in the bowels of societal development, they have the tendency to develop further independently, and to push beyond their own form of realisation. Human spirit does not stop still, all the more so since societal development itself keeps marching on. So for example, the bourgeoisie today looks different than it did 50 years ago, and at that time it looked different than 100 years ago, etc. Besides, the bourgeoisie can be broken down into very varied *strata*. There we have the *stratum* of the large capital magnates, the *strata* of the greater and smaller capitalists, the *stratum* of the petty-bourgeois [*Kleinbürger*], the *stratum* of the intellectuals, who form an intermediary *stratum* between bourgeoisie and proletariat. These various *strata* naturally have different interests, and from out of this difference in interests spring ideational trajectories [*Ideengänge*] of different kinds, different ways of interpreting the principles that the bourgeoisie has established in its time. Frequently in the time of its development, its ideas have found expression in utopias, in ideologically-illustrated depictions of the future. There are, or have been, not only socialist but also bourgeois utopias. In the eighteenth century, especially in France, we have seen an entire literature spring up of societal plans, of proposals or pictures of future societies, which all look very beautiful, but are mostly still more-or-less bourgeois utopias, speculations built on the ideology of the bourgeoisie.

III. Socialism and the Ideology of the Workers' Movement

But the application of bourgeois ideology to the situation of the proletariat went on to create the socialist ideology or utopia, egalitarian communism [*Gleichheitskommunismus*]. Workers or progressive [*vorgeschritten*] bourgeois who think of the proletariat, of the disinherited, formulated the theory: "Your equality, bourgeois, is nothing but a lie. You do not want to have true equality, your equality before the law is nothing so long as inequality in property and in living conditions continues to exist." And so

out of the replication or application of bourgeois ideology for the situation of the proletariat a new conception is formed, which is now called either communism or communist ideology. And here is the point that leads to the answer to our question: What is socialism? How do we recognise whether an idea or a measure or a policy is socialism or socialist? In other words: is there also an ideology of socialism? And what would socialism be if it had no normative criteria?

Now this question of whether socialism has an ideology is to be answered with a yes. Yes indeed, there is an ideology of socialism, and it has norms. How shall we find them? One could derive them from an imagined society, as many have done. But it then remains always a more-or-less arbitrary construction, which is inclined to mislead us to making blunders. In fact, practically usable normative criteria are not derived from a ready-made ingeniously worked-out societal plan, as much as individual people may like to believe that, but rather from the real living needs and possibilities of the societal class that is called to implement the socialist revolution, the proletariat, which arise from the stage that society has reached. However, this must be understood correctly. We must distinguish between an entire societal class and the individual adherents of this class. The proletarian as an individual person is a human being like the others, and as such naturally fallible. They are subject to the most varied intellectual influences, their education is for the greatest part today still deficient, and they can—we see this every day, after all—still be biased through all possible manner of prejudices, which they grew up afflicted by. Besides their merits they also have their human weaknesses, which emerge from their societal situation. But when I speak of the class of the proletariat, then I mean the workers as a collective group, who along with the members of other societal *strata* who feel the same or are allied with them develop certain ideas from their recognition of their class situation and its causes, which press hard for the realisation of a higher form of society. Hence the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels also demands as the first condition for the communists the organisation of the proletariat into a class.

What is a class? A class in a certain, so today modern society comprises such elements of this society that in the main exist under uniform living conditions—property and income relations—and represent an appreciable fraction of this society. Before a socialist movement existed, there were already proletarians, that is to say propertyless people who were entirely reliant on wage-labour for their income. But in general, this proletarian

felt themselves primarily to be a poor person. In their circles, a distinction was only made between rich and poor. This the proletarian certainly felt: these are the rich, we are the poor. But that as a worker they belonged to a particular societal class, unlike other poor people, others lacking means, that did not yet enter their consciousness. The organisation of the workers into a movement, where they feel themselves to be members of a particular societal class called to particular tasks, the members of the Communist League, first founded by Germans in 1847, set themselves as their task, and this also is today the task of the great party of the socialists. By organising this class, they create a class consciousness for it. For the workers, this does not exhaust itself in the insight that they have certain material interests of their own, but rather it is the consciousness that a higher, social-revolutionary task resides with them as workers in modern society, that they have to fulfil a historical mission for the further development of society. That was and is the precondition of the organisation of a socialist party in the full sense of the word.

That is already explained in the *Communist Manifesto*. But Ferdinand Lassalle has wonderfully pointed this out, albeit in somewhat different words, even with some expressions that one can challenge, in his address that he held in 1862 before Berlin workers, and then published under the title *The Workers' Programme*. A work that I can only recommend to everyone to read even today, even though some of it is outdated. After all, it is already over 50 years old today. In this work, Lassalle develops out of the historical situation of the workers of our age, what their "idea" is, as he expresses it. That is, he shows them that they are called by force of their situation to create a new society, and then calls on them to also draw their implications from this fact, not only for their political endeavours, but rather for their entire way of life, their entire *Ideenwelt*—always to think of this task wherever they are, to imbue themselves with the thought of it, and draw the conclusions from it. "The amusements of the thoughtless and the vices of the oppressed no longer become you", he says to the workers. "You should fill yourselves wholly with this idea, and never forget it: You are the rock on which the church of present is to be built."[8] One should not forget these fine words even today, and above and beyond the crudely material interests, which after all have their justification, never leave this great truth out of sight.

What has been the trajectory of the workers' movement? The modern workers' movement starts with isolated uprisings in factories, first against the machines, then with the formation of sects. The workers have as yet no

concept of their class, but they already aspire to different conditions, and since they do not yet see the means for their realisation in front of them, also do not have the political rights, and not even the possibility of winning these, they now form groups—sects that indulge in more-or-less fantastical plans. There is as yet no scientifically-founded theory to propagate at all. But as time goes on, this movement of revolts and uprisings turns into the real struggle of the workers in society, the class struggle. And as a class struggle, the struggle of the working class, the proletariat, is of necessity a *political* struggle. That is very important to register. The struggle, in which it is not just a matter of certain demands of the moment, is a political struggle; for here it is already a question of bringing to realisation comprehensive social demands. Partial movements of workers can at any time be socially indifferent, indeed even reactionary. That is still possible even today. Workers in factories can fight for special advantages relative to the general population. Workers can under some circumstances even for the price of a wage rise ally with their business-owners, in order to fleece the general public through high prices. That is no class struggle. Such a struggle may have its explanation, perhaps from time to time even its justification, but it has nothing at all to do with class struggle, it is a conventional struggle of interests.

The like of this has nothing whatsoever to do with socialism either. No more does the idea of simply making workers the masters of the factories in which they are employed. What we have seen in this respect in a neighbouring country to the East (Russia) is not socialism. Nobody said this more clearly than the significant social-economist Karl Rodbertus in his exchange of letters with Rudolf Meyer and Ferdinand Lassalle.[9] Lassalle had, as one knows, raised the demand for state credit on a grand scale for producer associations, which he held to be a means of transitioning to socialism. But Rodbertus insisted that the ownership by the workers of their business-enterprises that was to be created by this was an even worse form of private ownership than capitalist ownership. Why? Quite simply because it puts the workers, as soon as they have themselves become business-owners in their own industry, into opposition towards the general population, and slackens the drive to introduce labour-saving machinery to the detriment of the general public. But socialism is precisely the idea of elevating the interest of the general population above every special interest of certain groups, it starts out from the common interest of the class and not the group, it has nothing to do with such interests of separate

industries, which stand in opposition to the interest of the general population.

We have today before us a phenomenon that can be explained by the circumstances of the Revolution, that workers who beforehand mostly were organised in trade unions today oppose the unions in their enterprises.[10] Now my mission at this point is not to defend or attack the leaders of the trade unions. They may have made mistakes, that is a different matter. But the idea of a trade union that at least strives to include all the workers of a certain industry and is led in the spirit of the class struggle is in any case closer to socialism than proceeding from enterprise to enterprise, if it is not itself only a means of the trade union's struggle.

For the same reason I have all my born days been an opponent of the idea of improving the situation of the workers through profit-sharing [*Gewinnbeteiligung*]. Factory-owners, some out of noble-mindedness, others out of calculation, have allowed their workers to share in the profit of their factory. That is also not a socialist idea, for that brings the participating workers easily into opposition towards even colleagues in their own profession. The form of workers' profit-sharing worth striving for, insofar as one can speak of this, is the payscale [*Tarif*] that the community of workers agrees with the business-owners for the entire branch of the industry.

Now of course the individual trade union can also be conservative, and under some circumstances even reactionary. We have made the experience in England that trade unions directly opposed technological progress because they believed that their members would be harmed by it, and here and there this also happened in other countries too. We have experienced trade unions being conservative. But a party of the workers, which includes the works of all industries—whether it is a party substantially built on trade unionism, like the Labour Party in England, or politically-organised like the Social-Democratic Party is in Germany—this cannot be anything other than revolutionary in the greater sense of far-reaching progress in all domains of social life: economic, political, intellectual, and moral. Why so? Because in modern society, the workers as a class are not tied in their entirety, as is the case with almost all bourgeois parties, to any traditional institutions of the past. They have as a class no interests that stand against progress. As a class, their welfare and woe is tied to social progress. If individual workers believe that social progress, technological progress damages them because from time to time it makes workers superfluous, then

still the population as a whole [*Gesamtheit*] reaps from this progress the great advantage of the increase in the number of products, the raising of societal wealth. That is precisely the condition of social progress. For without a certain level of societal wealth, society also is not to be changed in a socialist vein.

The class of workers has the greatest interest in progress in all domains of production as well as general intercourse, and it is accordingly the enemy of all particularistic interests of property. Hence why precisely it is the bearer of the idea of socialism. This is shown also in the stance of the workers towards the state in general. At a certain stage of development, and in the face of a certain constitution of the state, the workers can be hostile towards it, and have opposed it in a hostile way, and must under certain circumstances oppose it. But that applies precisely only to the state in a certain *form*, under certain relations of rulership [*Herrschaftsverhältnisse*]. Yet where the *function* of the state is concerned as a summation of the nation in its entirety, as the appointed protector of the great common interest, there the workers stand with it on common ground. They are not tied to a specific state, they are not at all tied to a situation where society is permanently coalesced as a state, so to speak amalgamated through the state. Other forms of collective summation are conceivable. But the fundamental idea on which the state rests according to its rationalist [*vernunftrechtlich*] conception, that they uphold as well, and to it Lassalle in turn gives expression in his very well thought-through book, the work about the philosophy of Heraclitus, the great Greek philosopher, when for it he cites Heraclitus' statement: "Devotion to the commons! That is the eternal fundamental concept of ethics." That is also by necessity the ethics of the working class, which it must have as a class, however the multiplicity of the workers as individuals might be minded. The flaws of individuals are extinguished in the collective movement. In this is left over as a common idea what they all have in common more-or-less consciously in their social way of judging, besides the possible divergent characteristics that one or other of them has as a person. The working class is tied to the idea of the general community [*Allgemeinheit*]. To the questions that I presented at the time to five people, as I mentioned above, about what they understand under socialism, I received a classic answer from an old worker. On his piece of paper was written only a single word, namely: *solidarity*. It was from my perspective the most correct answer that could be given in just one word. The feeling of commonality, the connectedness of human beings as a society, that was the essential idea of socialism for this simple

man. It was clear that he associated with this a quite specific social-economic conception, and also fundamentally a correct conception.

But how is solidarity realised? The workers are engaged in various industries, in various factories, and it is unavoidable that their interests here occasionally get into conflict. Solidarity is realised in the state through political struggle, and this the working class can only lead with the greatest possible chance of success in a *democracy.* The abolition of every class privilege, that is the fundamental political right of the working class. Individual bourgeois can place themselves above class interests, and for ideological reasons support the realisation of full democracy. But no societal class can stand up for democracy as unreservedly, as unconditionally, in all domains as the working class. Democracy is the repeal of all class privilege, the same political right for all, and not only for elections to public representative bodies. But democracy reaches further still. It transfers itself to the entire legal system and also onto a series of other public institutions. It pushes in modern society necessarily for the removal of all capitalist monopolies, specifically for the divestment of their capitalist character. It raises the organisation of the workers as a party, the organisation of the workers as a class for their economic struggles, it raises the needs of states and municipalities. Where workers have the full democratic franchise and have attained class consciousness, they place ever greater demands of a civilised nature on the state, which make necessary greater expenditures. They increase the drive for the general community to take over monopolistic business enterprises—by the state or by municipalities depending on their nature. We have already been able to trace this clearly enough in peacetime. The social effect of the general franchise, which even by many socialists was underestimated for a long time, has intruded upon us so strongly that Marx and Engels too—who, although they were not opponents of democratic rights, at a certain point had little time for the struggle for the general franchise—became convinced that this struggle was thoroughly justified, that the democratic franchise is the great lever that the working class can wield to win more rights for itself, and to push through more measures with the aim of reshaping society. We have experienced this in peacetime with the aid of our political work in the Reich, in the states, and in the municipalities. Anyone who has followed social-policy legislation over recent decades in Germany and in other countries must admit that it has brought about several reforms of significance. Certainly, much has been exaggerated in praise of it, but it is still here, and all admit that this legislation is here thanks to the pressure of the organised working

class, in Germany through the pressure of Social Democracy as the party of socialism, which it could unfold with the necessary power by means of the democratic franchise. If the same has not been achieved in all countries, then in some precisely because the franchise there is still limited. In other countries, like for instance in France, which to a high degree is still an agrarian country, because the working class is not numerous enough and on top of this lacked political unity.

In Germany, meanwhile, more would have been achieved if the franchise had not been restricted in its largest state, and in the Reich, where after all it was as yet only formally equal, but in fact was similarly unequal, and where, under the constitution, legislative resolutions by the parliamentary assembly could simply be dismissed by the *Bundesrat*, and power relations in state and society still stood opposed to the full impact of the franchise. But the fact—the great potential force of democracy, and of the democratic franchise—has been proven. And the power relations that stood in the way of the assertion of its full effective force have now today fallen as a result of the Revolution. With that, the greatest domestic-political obstacle has been cleared out of the way, and the path towards a complete organic reshaping of the present societal order has been made free. But the organic path will be the best one.

IV. Difficulties on the Way Towards Socialism

But sadly we do not only have to deal with domestic-political obstacles. Today, there are many calls for socialisation [*Sozialisierung*]. We hear this call from the most varied sides. That is understandable. Socialisation is the all-encompassing technical term for the societalisation [*Vergesellschaftung*] aspired to by Social Democracy, which is meant to put an end to the damages and injustices of the capitalist economy. But from the way in which this call is frequently announced, from the impatient question: But why not socialise straightaway?, there still speaks out a large bit of miraculous belief in the immediate possibility and effective force of societalisation, as well as a complete misrecognition of the difficulties that lie in its way under the present conditions, and which also in part lie in the political domain. This impatience is comprehensible. I understand it, but everyone should be able to grasp at least so much, that so great a matter cannot possibly be the work of weeks or months. Today, where our industry has to contend with the greatest difficulties, and where in addition constraints lie before it whose scope we cannot yet gauge at all, because after all we do

not yet know the conditions that the foreign victors will inflict on us in Germany, today it takes miraculous belief—yes, I will use this drastic phrase—to imagine that, if we declare that this or that industry is socialised, then with this already anything whatsoever will substantially improve for the worker or for our community as a whole in the present moment.

Nationalisation [*Verstaatlichung*] or communalisation [*Kommunalisierung*] are the classic forms of societalisation. But they are naturally not an end in themselves; they are also only means to an end, whose highest task is the attainment of the highest possible general well-being. Its achievement is guaranteed in the economic domain, in production as well as in trade and intercourse, by bringing about the highest possible degree of economic efficiency [*Wirtschaftlichkeit*]. If one sets about socialising, one must also always ask oneself: Are the measures that we adopt and can adopt such that we also in fact achieve a higher level of economic efficiency, that we do not temporarily take steps backwards instead of forwards under the pressure of conditions with respect to it? I understand the impatience of which I spoke, and I value it as a driving force. But we do not want to delude ourselves about what is at stake today. The main concern with societalisation is that we bring production and other branches of the economy under the regulative control of the general public, and specifically under much stronger, comprehensive control than has existed hitherto. The transfer of the economy into its management by society and for society has various routes to realisation. It is not consigned to one specific route. In Germany, we currently have, leaving aside agriculture, around 3 million productive, commercial, and other enterprises of different kinds. A good half of these are small enterprises, individually-run enterprises, or enterprises with perhaps one assistant worker, which do not immediately come into consideration for socialisation. Let us say that there are more than that, let us put the number at two thirds. Then there are still 1 million enterprises of the most various sizes left over—medium, large, and gigantic—enterprises of the most various kinds of production, exchange, and transportation. Does anybody believe that anything about this would straightaway be improved if here instead of business-owners officials are installed everywhere indiscriminately? I do not believe so. The transformation from private into public enterprises is a process that in every particular case must be carried out carefully and systematically according to certain considerations. One must examine which branches of the economy or which category of business-enterprises can be taken over initially by society with the greatest effective force, and which one would

better still leave or even have to leave in private hands for the time being, so that economic activity does not start to stagnate. More important than the question of public or private enterprise is at the present moment the question of functioning or stalling enterprise, for our people today is more reliant on work than at any earlier time.

Before the war, Germany taken as a whole was a wealthy country. Today, after the war, it is a poor country, compelled to pursue the same economic policy as poor countries do. Because it must import raw materials and partly also foodstuffs to the tune of billions altogether, in order to be able to keep the economy going at all, it is forced to export finished products on as large a scale as possible. For ultimately one can only pay for products with products. Gold is soon exhausted, and the notes that we print nobody abroad will take off us for the value printed on them.

In his day, the second German Reich Chancellor, Graf Caprivi, at the start of the 1890s, said with reference to the fact that Germany cannot produce all the raw materials and foodstuffs that it needs itself: We must either export goods or people.[11] Now the export of people is called in other words: emigration. I fear that a very sizeable part of our workers will be tempted to emigrate anyway. But we must not artificially increase this number even more. I have already been asked the question: Where should they go? A very legitimate question. Today in the world we find quite different circumstances than before this frightful, criminal war. We often encounter a hatred that is reflected in legislation that is hostile to Germans. This makes emigrating much more difficult than it was before the war. Here the same thing may happen to the German worker as Freiligrath says about revolution:

> And that it looks for foreign hearths and quietly settles in the ashes.[12]

For that reason, we must not artificially increase this number today even further through dubious experiments. We must endeavour to keep the number of those of our workers who must head abroad as low as possible.

That is a further reason why we must proceed carefully, gradually, and systematically with socialisation, and why we must leave non-socialist industry the possibility of living and working in the meantime. Yet I say once again: socialisation has various paths. It can take place by taking over certain business-enterprises or industrial groups directly, whether in the form of state-owned enterprise, municipal enterprise, or Reich enterprise. But it can also take place if the general public intervenes ever more strongly

in the operation of business enterprises through laws and ordinances. After all, in part it is already doing this today. The Factory Law too was in its day regarded and contested by the capitalists as an intrusion into their sovereignty. They wanted to be masters in their own home. With us, among others Bismarck once expressed himself with similar outrage about factory inspections as the factory-owners in England had when they were first introduced. He also did not want this law to come into his business affairs. But it came in nonetheless, it came in to the blessing of the general public, and to the advantage of social—and yes, also economic progress. This can be expanded further. Step by step, the state or the Reich, as the representative of the general public, can participate in the business-enterprises that they for the time being are leaving in the hands of capitalists; in their profit and also in their price determination, so that monopolies do not emerge that would necessarily make prices more expensive. This has happened here and there, and it can be developed still further. In this way, the general public can assume ever greater rights to the economy, and an ever larger share of production.

20 years ago, I wrote the following statement in one of my pieces, and I still subscribe to it today: "There can be more socialism in a good Factory Act than in the nationalisation of a whole group of factories".[13] For here the interest of the general public is grasped with a much greater scope, and the welfare of a much greater number of people realised. Compared to this, what does it matter whether the state has a few more business-enterprises and then perhaps even still manages them in a capitalist way?

V. On the Why and How of the Realisation of Socialism

The working class demands the democratisation of the state and of administration, the democratisation of enterprises, the extension of democratisation into all domains, into education [*Unterrichtswesen*], into bodily care [*Körperpflege*], into art, and into intercourse. In all domains the workers' movement surges forwards on the strength of its entire nature and by dint of the fact that it is producing ever more elements who also want to push forwards intellectually, who are not satisfied with achieving material advantages, improving their income, but who in truth also want to be intellectually free. Their number is perhaps not as great as we might all wish, but the number of workers is constantly growing who are learning, who are

educating themselves, who strive towards intellectual heights. After all, one sees today how many workers have shown themselves to be qualified for the highest positions in the Reich and in the state above and beyond their class activity. I am the last to flatter the workers. But I can say this: the workers' movement has done great work by clarifying this class consciousness for the workers and implanting it in them, this class consciousness that many a bourgeois, many of those present have cursed and wished away without knowing what they were doing with that. For the workers who in the full sense of the word have come to the consciousness of their class—these are the ideologues of the workers. That we have these in so great a number among the workers, to this it should be attributed that with all the convulsions playing out around us, this great Revolution is still taking place comparatively peacefully—I would even say lawfully.

At the economic congress that took place here in Berlin 14 days ago, I said to the capitalists: you have often condemned the workers' movement or been angry about it, but just now look at this Revolution: what are even the regrettable confrontations that we have experienced in Berlin, what are these daily demonstrations? After all, hardly a hair on anyone's head has actually been harmed.[14] Certainly, here and there excesses have taken place as well. But in general the movement is taking place peacefully, one may say lawfully. Why? Because already before the Revolution we had a workers' movement that organised the workers, shaped them politically, in trade unions, in all manner of bodies it created, made them capable of understanding social life, political life, the life of the state, of grasping social contexts and not flailing about blindly, as workers would do who did not understand anything about these matters.

In all domains, the class movement of the workers pushes to reshape society along the lines of abolishing all class distinctions, and of the planned regulation of the whole economic life through society itself. And that, I believe I may say, *that is socialism*. It is no formula, no schema, it is also not only the cause of the wage-labourers. Great *strata* of modern society are changing the stance they are taking. There was a time where employees felt that they were coessential with their superiors [*Prinzipale*], and looked contemptuously down on the workers. When as a young man I was an employee in a banking firm, I had a colleague who was habitually the sworn enemy of his bosses, and lived constantly on a war footing with them. But that I was a socialist, who was warming to the workers, that he could not get into his head. He was a proper Berliner, and liked to express himself in the Berlin dialect: "'Ow come all these cobblers and tailors is

such a big deal to ya?" was the reproach he constantly made to me.[15] Today, even the employees of the banking firms already think quite differently, let alone those of other companies. More and more, their situation too is shifting as a result of economic development. They feel that they are, if not in the same then still in a similar situation to the workers. And this development is continuing. Like the employees, other *strata* of society also have an immediate interest in this great movement towards socialism. There will always be differences in people's societal position. And why should there not be? Where they do not lead to exploitation, where they do not lead to oppression, then they are after all an enrichment of societal life. Class distinctions should fall. Personal differences, differences in activity, in professions [*Beruf*] and professional positions [*Berufsstellung*], may they still last for a long while yet.

If I am to summarise what I have developed here, then I could define socialism as follows:

> **Socialism is the sum of the social demands and natural ambitions of workers in modern capitalist society who have come to a recognition of their class situation and the tasks of their class.**

To grasp these ambitions and tasks of their class, for that we need no image from the past, we need no utopian construction. Everyone can envision for themselves the society of the future as beautifully as they wish, they and their imagination are thoroughly at liberty to do so. But the movement itself draws its strength and its goals from the real foundations of societal life, from the real needs of the class that forms its centre. On its basis it puts together its demands. And the summary of these demands—one can read whichever programme of a socialist party one will—*the intellectual summary*, *the ideational content of these demands*, *that*, I repeat, *is socialism*.

Socialism leads to the expedient collective economic management and ultimately to the rising realisation of the solidarity of all the members of the societal organism, to the realisation of social connectedness.

That is naturally, as already briefly mentioned, a procedure that takes time. But it is a process that *is taking place*. And the great advantage that our Revolution has brought lies, in my opinion, in the fact that in Germany it has cleared two powers out of the way: monarchism and everything that attaches to it, as well as militarism; and that it has brought the people full democracy. This gigantic advantage is underestimated. It is a thoroughly

immature interpretation of the passages that Marx writes at the end of his work *Capital*, if from them one draws the conclusion that he literally meant that the socialist revolution would be an act that takes place over a short period of time. No, it takes years, decades even. But the auxiliary means to do so is here, the great weapon of the proletariat and the classes equivalent to it, and even if these at the next election do not immediately attain a majority, we would not be lost even then. The democratic franchise would still remain in the hands of the largest class in society, as would the unremitting onward pressure that emerges from its class situation. All of this would remain as a driving force, and would necessarily compel the reforms that the working class needs. To realise these things all at once, for that our society—if one looks at it more closely, if one wanders through our capital and other cities, and studies the conditions in the countryside—for that today's society is far too multiform and far too lively an organism, not a dead mechanism that one can change at any time at short notice.

Once again, I understand the impatience that has seized many people. But I have to add to this: I do not share it, and not because I am satisfied and am longing for peace and quiet, but because I am convinced that great things have been achieved, and that the working class has the weapon that it can compare with what the great physicist of Antiquity, Archimedes, meant when he said: "Give me whereon to stand, and I will move the earth." So too can the working class say: "Give me the general and equal franchise, and the social principle as the fundamental condition of emancipation is achieved." Twenty years ago, prompted by a comment that I do not need to repeat here, I wrote the following passage, which I shall permit myself to reproduce here. I said there:

> The final result of my view is that socialism is coming or is in the ascendant, not as the result of a great decisive political battle, but rather as the outcome of a whole series of economic and political victories of the workers' movement in the most varied domains. Not as the consequence of a great increase in oppression and misery, of the debasement of the workers, but rather as the consequence of their growing social influence and of the relative improvements they have won which are of an economic, political, and generally social and ethical nature. Not out of chaos do I see socialist society arising, but out of the alliance between the organisational creations of the workers in the domain of free enterprise and the creations and achievements of democracy struggling in the state and in the municipality. Through all convulsions and all the lashing-out of the reactionary powers, I still see class

> struggle itself taking on ever more civilised forms, and precisely in this civilisation of the class struggle, the political and economic struggles of the workers, I see the best guarantee for the realisation of socialism.[16]

I wrote this in 1899, and that is also my conviction today, today more than ever. And in this consciousness, that we will realise the demands of the workers step by step faster than ever before, but organically, because fewer obstacles lie in our way, in this consciousness I say to the impatient members of the working class: We have won democracy, the right about which Lassalle said the workers: It is your *social* principle. Trust in the creative power of this right, it will lead you more surely to social emancipation than any brutal interventions in the so highly sensitive organism of the modern, highly-developed economy.

So I will hope that, for those who did not yet know socialism and were prejudiced towards it, my explanations have, if not won them over to it, then still at least persuaded them that it is a great cultural movement, a movement that is unstoppable and which precisely for this reason works to the best effect for the general community; that it is encapsulated in a great political party, which spreads social enlightenment among the workers, that awakens understanding for the needs of the economy and for the nature of the measures that must be taken in order to lead society further along the trajectory of social progress. If it did not exist, then today we would not simply have the Revolution, then we would today have anarchy with all its horrors. But we may hope that this Revolution, which has already achieved great things, will further stay on the paths of organic progress, to the advantage of all the oppressed and the destitute, and to the satisfaction of all those who have a lively interest, a warm sentiment for the further expansion of what has been achieved into a society built on the fundamental principle of general solidarity, founded on the abolition of classes.

Notes

1. *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon* was a major German-language encyclopaedia, founded in 1839 by publisher Joseph Meyer (1796–1856), which merged with its longstanding competitor the *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* in 1984.
2. Marie Roch Louis Reybaud (1799–1879), French political economist and liberal politician, whose *Étude sur le reformateurs ou socialistes modernes*

(1840) earned him a place in the prestigious Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1850.

3. Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–1883* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 285.
4. Ibid., pp. 324–5.
5. Ibid., p. 325.
6. Ibid.
7. Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870–1871* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), p. 335.
8. Ferdinand Lassalle, *Das Arbeiterprogramm*, in Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, vol. 2*, Eduard Bernstein (ed.) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), p. 200.
9. Rudolf Hermann Meyer (1839–1899), German social-conservative publicist and Christian anti-capitalist, correspondent of Marx, Engels, Laura Lafargue, and Karl Kautsky, supporter of trade unionism as a means to check *laissez-faire* economics.
10. Ed. B.—Written December 1918.
11. Georg Leo Graf von Caprivi de Caprera de Montecuccoli (1831–1899), German statesman, Bismarck's successor as Reich Chancellor, spearheaded a "new course" of anti-protectionist foreign and social-reformist domestic policy.
12. Ferdinand Freiligrath, 'Die Revolution', in Freiligrath, *Gedichte*, Karl-Maria Guth (ed.) (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2014), p. 133.
13. Eduard Bernstein, 'The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy', in Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 168.
14. It is worth recalling that Bernstein wrote this text originally before the *Spartakus* uprising in January 1919. See Marius S. Ostrowski (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein on the German Revolution: Selected Historical Writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
15. Bernstein writes out the original phrase phonetically in Berlin dialect: "*Wat jehn denn Sie die Schuster und Schneider an?*" The closest equivalent would hence be a rendering in Cockney.
16. Eduard Bernstein, 'Meine Stellung zum theoretischen Teil des Erfurter Programms', *Vorwärts* 16(206) (1899).

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CHAPTER 16

The Socialisation of Enterprises: Guiding Principles for a Theory of Socialisation

Lecture held by *Eduard Bernstein* in the Political Science Seminar at the University of Basel on 24 February 1919.

The lecture that I am here presenting to the general public was held by Eduard Bernstein on the occasion of an invitation by the student body here for an evening lecture, in the afternoon of 24 February on my invitation in the Political Science Seminar of our university, which I lead, whereby it is unnecessary to emphasise that this invitation was issued to Bernstein as the member of a certain party or a certain people, but solely as a world-renowned social scientist. The pertinent character of the lecture on that score emerges moreover from the choice and the treatment of the topic with every desirable clarity. The lecture was noted down in shorthand by Herr Schlichtholz, and read through by Bernstein as well as myself. The lecture was followed by a short discussion, in which the author referred in particular to the difficulty of attaining concrete criteria for the concept of the "readiness" of economic life in its individual forms for socialisation, and emphasised the necessity of a theoretical division of society into classes that is based not on the relationship of dependency or independence towards capital, or specifically the means of production, but rather on the level of income combined with lifestyle [*Lebenshaltung*]. The Assistant of our seminar, Dr. Camille Higy, then also touched on the question of the form of remuneration [*Entlohnungsart*] of workers in state enterprises and the potential character of erstwhile wage-labourers as state officials [*Staatsbeamte*]. Bernstein answered these questions. Since no

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shorthand report of the discussion was taken down, it could not be reproduced here.[1]

Rob. Michels

* * *

Prof. Robert Michels, as the convener of the Political Science Seminar of the University of Basel, greeted Eduard Bernstein with the following address:

In these rooms, which are dedicated to science and to it alone, I offer my thanks and greetings to you, Eduard Bernstein. Thanks for the fact that you did not shy away from the great effort to accept our invitation to an academic lecture in the short intervening time between the arrival of the late afternoon train and the nearby evening gathering in the Casino, where they are waiting to hear you speak. But my greetings are offered to you, personally as well as materially, from the heart. I will always gratefully remember that it was you who gave me the opportunity to earn my very first scientific spurs in the German-speaking domain—in Italy I had already previously written in specialist journals. That was in 1902, when you founded the periodical *Dokumente des Sozialismus*, which bore a historical, retrospective character. Since that time, I have consistently followed your work with the liveliest interest, frequently with a prevailing feeling of critique, more frequently still, especially so far as the non-political side of your activity came into question, with lively agreement, and always with human admiration. Permit me to say to you that this admiration stemmed from two causes. For one, it applies precisely to you as a man of science. I may well put it explicitly: You are one of us, and if you are without a chair today, then that is absolutely only to be understood by the fact that Germany has not known how to treat men of your school of thought and your calibre appropriately to their worth. For, that you are one of us, that you have not only proved through the results of your literary accomplishments, but also through the analytic form of your thinking itself. But secondly, and after all this is closely connected with your actual occupation as a man of science, my deep respect pertains to your great love of truth. You have served truth through all the thickets of the day-to-day turmoils and bickering. You serves it as a friend of Karl Marx, as a herald of the theories of Karl Marx, and as a critic of Karl Marx. That you became the father of revisionism was not to be understood as a proclivity for iconoclasm, but rather from out of the love for truth, or what seemed to you to be the truth, which had to be proclaimed if that which in Marxism possessed eternal value should not be put in question by antiquated epigonism.

In 1901, Eduard Bernstein, at the invitation of the Social-Scientific Students' Association of the University of Berlin, you delivered a lecture that was much discussed and highly contentious at the time, which you gave the title: "How is *scientific* socialism possible?"—Today, in this heavy hour, in which the old world is supposed to give birth to a new one, and where the danger arises that the new is fouled in blood from the outset by the evil parentage of the old, you will deliver to us the parallel or complementary lecture to that topic, which might well be called: "How is *practical* socialism possible?" In the name of our seminar, I ask you to take the floor to this end. You can be sure of our rapt attention.

Hereupon Eduard Bernstein rose to speak, and made the following remarks:

Herr Professor Michels! Ladies and gentlemen!

I thank you very heartily for your friendly words. You say too much of my capabilities and my character if you present what you say as a fact; but you do not say too much if thereby you want to express what I wish to be and what I strive for.

Of course, I am principally a practical politician, a campaigner for the 47 years that I have belonged to Social Democracy. But already early on I recognised the necessity that the political campaigner in our time must be above all things an economist, and must have a sense and understanding for the requirements of economic life.

Further, you have also expressed a wish of mine in another respect. If I had followed the wish of my heart in my choice of occupation, I would have become a teacher. Indeed, what is lovelier than to be the teacher of the mature adolescent youth! Insofar, ladies and gentlemen, it is certainly also a joy for me to be able to hold a lecture for you today.

I

If I will also tell you nothing fundamentally new on the question of socialisation today, then it is still a matter of finding certain aspects according to which a position is to be taken when proceeding in this significant question. The call for socialisation rings out extraordinarily vigorously in recent times. The political revolutions that have taken place following the world war that has just ended, and specifically have taken place under the leadership and by means of the strength of the working classes, the great body of industrial workers, it is they that precisely for this reason let the call for socialisation resound loudly anew. Certainly, not only from the side of

Social Democracy, but still predominantly from the mouths of social democrats. In the ranks of the party of the working class, the demand for socialisation has now been raised for a long time.

Certainly not already from the time when Social Democracy first came into existence. If you read through the older socialist programmes, you will find nothing about that demand; nothing in the programme that Ferdinand Lassalle gave the reawakening German workers' movement in 1863; nothing in the programme of the General German Workers' Association that he founded. Also nothing in the programme that was developed six years later for the rival organisation founded in Eisenach under the leadership of Bebel and Liebknecht. Likewise nothing in the statute of the International Workingmen's Association, which was developed by Karl Marx in 1864. The demand crops up for the first time, still in a vaguely hazy form, in the draft of the programme for German Social Democracy, once it was unified in 1875—I am speaking here exclusively about Germany. In Germany's Social Democracy you find the idea mentioned for the first time in the draft of the Gotha Programme of 1875. There, the transformation of the means of labour into the common property of the general public is demanded as paramount. Yet Karl Marx positioned himself against this proposition very sharply in a letter about the proposal. As the demand is posed there, he explains, it represents an affront to the scientific insight gained on the part of socialists. How was this meant? One should go back to the work *Capital*, which had appeared in the meantime, whose fundamental ideas had already been developed by Marx and Engels in 1847–1848 in the *Communist Manifesto*, but had been given more exact elaboration and a certain theoretical finish in *Capital*, the first volume of which appeared in 1867. What does Marx develop in this work? I will only clarify it briefly insofar as it described a fundamental break with all earlier socialism. Until Marx, socialists started out from natural-rights points of view, they namely founded—however they otherwise differed from one another—socialism on proofs of the injustice and the inexpediency of the given societal institutions, or derived it from the conception of a society that they had in their imagination. The Gotha Programme did things exactly like this. Socialism there is justified as follows: "Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture, *and since* useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society."[2] Marx comments scornfully on this that, after all, precisely in society the exploitation of the worker was possible as well. Starting out from the concept of society, one could prove anything imaginable. Further: in the

elaboration of their reform proposals, the older socialists either started out from the illustration of model societies, from ideal states or utopias, or they started out from plans that had the aim of overthrowing society, in order then to build it back up, so to speak, in a new form, or they had the aim of constructing model societies behind the back of the existing society, communist colonies or the like. That was the intellectual content of the socialist movement as it existed before Marx was writing, and it is from this that his theory is making a break. This theory one can describe as a sociological theory of development, in contrast or also in comparison to Darwin's theory, which we know as a biological theory of development. And it is a curious coincidence that in the same year in which the epoch-defining work of Darwin about the *Origin of Species* appeared, in 1859, Marx's book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* was also published, where in the preface he lays out the fundamental ideas of his theory of society. The main relevant idea there is that society itself forms in its bowels the elements of a new society, which asserts itself in its constitution once it has reached a certain stage of development. And what in Darwin is the struggle of species for existence, is in Marx the struggle by classes in society. This is already shown in the *Communist Manifesto*. It lets the class struggles of earlier epochs pass by and then eventually comes to modern society, whose most important classes consist of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is, as is well-known to you, presented in the first volume of *Capital* exclusively as part of the struggle over surplus value in the capitalist economy, a struggle that plays out on the one side between workers and business-owners, on the other side between the business-owners themselves, and which leads to the situation that enterprises become ever larger, that the small enterprises are swallowed up by the large ones, that labour in these large enterprises becomes ever more societal work, while the appropriation of surplus value remains individual. But incrementally this already-societal production reaches a stage where this individual, or specifically private form becomes impossible to unite with its societal content. In the end, in the penultimate chapter of *Capital*, which outlines the entire historical tendency of capitalist accumulation, Marx says:

> Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the co-operative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common.[3]

And further he says:

> Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. Thus integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.
>
> The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation. This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: i.e., on co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.[4]

That is the theory of Marx, according to which the source of the new society is not to be looked for in an imaginary ideal, but rather in the forces and institutions that have developed in society itself out of the nature of its mode of production. This idea was scientifically justified in *Capital*, and compared with it—here one must agree with Marx—the statement in the Gotha Programme was by all means a theoretical step backwards.

The idea developed here now only made a breakthrough in Social Democracy under the Anti-Socialist Law, as a result of the activity of a series of social democrats from the Marxist school, of whom the best-known and also the most-valued by many as a theorist is Karl Kautsky. Besides him, August Bebel and myself have especially popularised this theory as far as possible and, when at the end of the state of exception, the party felt the need for a new programme, a programme was resolved at its congress in Erfurt in 1891, the so-called Erfurt Programme, in which the demand is justified like this:

> The gulf between the propertied and the propertyless is further increased by the crises grounded in the nature of the capitalist mode of production, which become ever more all-encompassing and destructive, raise general uncertainty to the normal state of society, and deliver the proof that the productive forces of society today have grown above our heads, that private property in the means of production has become impossible to unite with their application and full development in accordance with their purpose.[5]

Some time beforehand, in 1877, Friedrich Engels had written a treatise in which he defended the Marxist theory against Eugen Dühring and

outlined its ideas in a masterful form. An extract from this work, which summarised its more general chapters and carries the title *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, was published in a new edition in 1891. There, Engels at the end gives an outline of the course of development of revolutionary social transformation, and I may perhaps read this out to you in an abbreviated form. It is a matter of identifying the various stages of development. First the rise and the nearest effects of capitalism, the appropriation of societal production by the capitalist. Then the growth of the capitalist enterprise and its production, the ever-increasing opposition between bourgeoisie and proletariat, as well as its counterpoint in the contradiction between the societal organisation in the individual enterprise and the societal anarchy in production overall. This contradiction increases in its further course to the point of nonsensicality. "*The mode of production rises in rebellion* [Ed. B.—in the crises that pile up] *against the form of exchange*. The bourgeoisie are convicted of incapacity further to manage their own social productive forces." Hereupon he outlines the next stage, again very characteristically, as: "Partial recognition of the social character of the productive forces forced upon the capitalists themselves. Taking over of the great institutions for production and communication, first by joint-stock companies, later on by trusts, then by the State."[6] The end is made by the proletarian revolution, which resolves these contradictions. You can find that very beautifully put together in Engels.

But how does reality now relate to this? I do not think I will meet with any objection when I say: The tendency of development is correctly indicated, and we could provide many practical examples for this, among them the almighty increase in the number of joint-stock corporations. In Marx, these do not yet play any great part. Engels already saw much more of this, and stresses it as well, but he had still not yet seen the scope of shareholding and the elaboration of its forms that we have experienced. You know how much joint-stock corporations have increased in number; but every corporation shows us the transformation of the role of the capitalist in the production process. The joint-stock corporation is led by directors, who are employees of the relevant company. But the shareholders are mostly other people who do not lead the production progress, and who customarily even know little or frequently nothing at all about it. The shareholder has their papers from the banker, for they buy those shares that this banker recommends to them as lucrative, regardless of what and how the enterprise produces. If you at any point attend a general meeting of a corporation, you will be able to observe that there is hardly a more pitiable role than the one that the individual shareholder plays in such a

meeting. The directors look down with a certain disdain on the shareholders, who after all may otherwise be quite intelligent people.

So far, Engels' depiction is thus correct. But there is still one objection. The tendency is in general accurately identified, but here in his depiction it is not taken into consideration whether everything in the economy now happens simultaneously. On the contrary, an equality of development is assumed that, if we look at actual society, is not in fact present. Particular industries and industry groups have, we may say today, in many respects achieved the level of development identified here. Others are close to it. But a great part is still far removed from it. Between the higher and the lower levels there also lie many small and minuscule intermediary parts. As a result, quite apart from agriculture, where there are even more differences, because agriculture is an organic process where concentration cannot assert itself without further ado in the way that it can in industry, which is a mechanical process, even in the latter we have no homogenous state of affairs before us. Hence, logically, in it too a simultaneous and similar proceeding is out of the question. For according to Marx's theory, socialisation starts where certain conditions of productive development have been fulfilled; where they are not fulfilled, according to Marx too the immediate occasion for socialisation would not yet exist.

II

I am starting from these considerations, derived from practice, when I try to develop directive principles for a possible theory of socialisation. For after all, theory is actually only the summary of practice. One can often hear it said that something may be correct in theory but it is different in practice. Yet then practice has not been evaluated correctly, or something is missing in the theory. We must distinguish between scientific and speculative theory. If one speaks in the way I have mentioned, then one is referring to a speculative theory. In such a theory, substantive facts are overlooked only too often, or not sufficiently taken into account, and as a result of this a contradiction can then emerge between theory and practice. By contrast, scientific theory is supposed to be practice summarised in a unified way.

Now if we examine and analyse industry more closely, we will soon find the distinguishing markers that we have to look for to achieve our purpose. With respect to the usage of materials for human purposes, production falls into three great stages of processing. The first is the extraction of

raw materials and their initial preparation. The second stage is the processing of raw materials into semi-finished products [*Halbfabrikate*], and the third stage is the manufacture of finished products [*Fertigfabrikate*]. Every product of industry goes through this path of development.

The acquisition of raw materials, again leaving aside agriculture, consists mainly of the so-called extractive industries, the obtaining of mineral resources, ores, coals, salts, etc. But the deposits of these resources today are almost all in capitalist hands. Still we can say that precisely these mineral resources are of right the property of the general public [*Allgemeinheit*]. The claim to the resources under the soil truly accrues by their nature to the general public. In their transfer into common ownership one can approve all manner of possible compensations for their present possessors, yet the public has the actual rightful claim to the untapped resources. But something else is also to be taken into consideration in this. In the question of socialisation, I am not merely relying on the characteristic quality of mineral resources as the offering of nature to all people. Here I am also taking into account the mode of production. The deposits are monopolised, and they are also almost in their entirety capitalistically managed. There was a time where even in the extraction of ores, etc., small enterprises still existed, where even small enterprises still predominated. But that has almost all fallen away. In Europe, the small enterprise in extractive industry is a thing of the past. The deposits of mineral resources are almost all in capitalist hands and are tilled capitalistically on a large scale [*großkapitalistisch*].

But further, the product is also to be taken into consideration. An important aspect of the question of socialisation is the nature of the product. *I consider the following to be capable of socialisation: the manufacture of products that are independent of personal taste, of fashion, etc., which evince a great degree of similarity, satisfy a widespread need, and have a large turnover.*

The coals that are drawn out of the earth always stay the same; although they are different in quality as consumer items, they are independent of personal taste, and they serve a great general need. If instead of the private business-owners the state or communities exploit mines, the product still remains the same despite this. The latter may perhaps not work as rationally, but the product is provided to the general public in the same quality as by the private business-owners. Here, in my view, socialisation is hence possible *prima facie*, firstly because production is carried out capitalistically on a large scale, and then because the product is an item of general requirement, independent of fashion and taste.

Something similar is the case with the *manufacture of semi-finished products*. As examples of semi-finished product manufacturing are predominantly to be named the smelteries, the spinning mills, the tanneries, the sawmills, and other further industry groups that prepare the raw product for processing in the final manufacturing industry [*Fertigindustrie*]. These too create for the greatest part products that have a large turnover and are almost uniformly independent of fashion and taste. An iron band, an iron girder, a steel billet, etc., can have certain differences in quality, but they are independent of taste. The same is the case with textile threads. Here, we have various numbers depending on their grade [*Feinheit*], but the thread for each number is always the same, it is uniform, it is independent of taste and fashion. And on the other side, semi-finished manufacturing today is also overwhelmingly a large-scale capitalist enterprise with a very strong tendency towards the formation of monopolies. In it, because it creates comparatively simple and similar products, technology, machines, chemistry, etc., play a dominant role vis-à-vis human labour power. In the smelteries, you find a relatively low number of high-quality workers. The great majority of the smeltery workers are unskilled labourers. And if you watch more closely, you will find that here the costs of human labour power are low in relation to the total sum of business capital, compared to those in final manufacturing. The smelteries very strongly exploit the workers, but the product eases the way to socialisation. It is quite interesting to see in the statistics what enormous quantities of capital lie in the heavy iron industry. But how, taken in relative terms, is the number of workers it engages distributed? In the entire metallurgical industry of Germany the latest number of workers was approximately 2 million; of these, about a quarter account for semi-finished production, but three-quarters for the manufacturing industries. In the former, work is in the highest degree societal production in Marx's sense. Here too monopolisation is comparatively easy and all the aspects are present that in my opinion favour socialisation. Naturally, other facts still also come into consideration, which cannot be taken into account here, because describing the nature of these industries only gives a picture of their tendency. At one time, the opinion was widespread and at its time also had considerable justification that the state necessarily operates economically worse than private enterprise, because in the latter a greater consciousness of individual responsibility was vouched for through personal interest. Because the state works bureaucratically through its system of officials, it necessarily also works worse than private enterprise. Something of this is also still true

today. Yet in part things have also changed. Our officialdom today is technically and also commercially better-trained than previously. The obdurate old bureaucratic spirit no longer prevails everywhere. And I, ladies and gentlemen, who through the quirk of circumstance now have entered public office myself, and was also prejudiced by the general verdict about the *Geheimräte* [senior civil servants], who knew many jokes about them, was, where I had to deal directly with *Geheimräte*, shocked how comparatively young most of these gentlemen are, and with how much knowledge and understanding of practice they treat the questions that have reached them.[7] Officials are different today than they were before. But still, in state enterprise many a great step is yet needed to get to the level of development in private enterprise.

Now in one of the industries of which I spoke to you, namely where the coal industry, the extraction and use of coal is concerned, we find ourselves at an important point in its development. It will be known to you in what great quantities Germany consumes oils and other fatty substances, and is necessitated by its location to obtain them domestically as far as possible. One is now trying already to extract these oils and fats from coalmining. Vast sums of money have been expended on ascertaining the most practical methods, and significant successes have also already been achieved. These are things that have been accomplished by private enterprises. The private enterprise, and the joint-stock corporation too, can risk costs and does so too. Today, where through the war Germany has turned from a wealthy country into a poor one, where it can no longer afford large-scale imports like before, that is of great importance for it. There it is then still a question whether a complete nationalisation [*Verstaatlichung*] would be appropriate right now. I am not saying that it is not. I am only saying that there is a moment here that is to be taken into account if the question of how far one can intervene here is to be decided.

After all, you already know that we have in the German Reich—no, in the German Republic; we cannot blithely ignore its name, because abroad, if someone or other says German Reich, they think of a *Kaiserreich*. At the word "Reich", a German only thinks about the collectivity of all the states of Germany, approximately how Englishmen think when they say "United Kingdom", whereas the foreigner translates Reich as "empire" and hence has in mind the old *Kaiserreich*. I will rather hence use the expression "the Federal Republic of Germany [*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*]". So, this Federal Republic now has installed a commission to examine the question of socialisation. In it there are almost exclusively enthusiastic social

policymakers [*Sozialpolitiker*] and social democrats. We have Professors Ballod, Vogelstein, and Wilbrandt, and the social democrats Cunow, Hilferding, Hue, and Kautsky, and the latter is the chair of the commission.[8] This selection can hardly be more favourable for the cause of socialisation. Only it is often asked among the general public why socialisation has not already long since taken place, where after all almost exclusively adherents of the idea are represented in the commission. Well, ladies and gentlemen, the people who ask this have no conception of what kinds of problems lie behind this. They believe that socialisation will bring paradise on Earth. But one cannot change everything through it straightaway.

We want to take in view yet further domains of economic life as well. For example, the railways and the urban light railways are a similar product. Here too the state intervenes, where they are not already administered by community and state. In England, until just before the war we had privatised railways, albeit subject to many state regulations. Thus the management cannot forbid any person from accessing their carriages. In this vein, they hence no longer have their right of free self-determination, but lie under state coercion. The railways are, because of their similarity, also very well-suited to socialisation.

Another branch is the insurance business. Not perhaps in all its divisions, but otherwise it is well prepared for socialisation. There are various branches in which the speculative element prevails, and which thereby do not possess a sufficiently secure foundation for it. On the other side, the sizeable life insurance sector and a series of other insurers are so very scientifically worked-out that the speculative element is directly ruled out. These insurance firms, which rest on a strong scientific foundation, can be socialised, whereas the speculative ones cannot.

Things go similarly, but not quite the same, in banking. With the nationalisation of banks one should not let oneself be guided too much by the size of the enterprises. The size of an enterprise is not determinant for its socialisation. Individual branches of banking can be socialised. In Germany, we have already had the development during the war that the great public savings banks [*Sparkassen*] became ever more banking institutions, took on ever more functions of banking transactions, and also could handle them quite well. But a part of the banking sector is also constituted by securities trading, and the state will do very well to keep its hands off it so long as securities still exist at all.

If you go further into industry and come to the manufacturing of finished products, you will find a different picture, which is not consistent

everywhere. We have some finished products that have a secure turnover and can be taken in hand by the state and by society. However, here too taste and expediency play a significant role, and the entire distribution of industry is likewise completely different. I have already shown you the contrast in the processing of metals, how many workers are occupied in final manufacturing and how many more high-quality workers we have here. In the manufacturing of finished products, there are now many enterprises, large and small, in which change [*Wechsel*] plays a major role, and here I believe, if the state took them into its control, socialisation can and must only go ahead slowly. Let us take weaving in comparison to spinning. In 1907, there were over 3000 such businesses in Germany. But a good five-sixths of production was centralised into a few large spinning mills. But if we move onto weaving, you will find a number of 60–70,000 businesses, because here taste and the way in which materials are processed plays a major role. It would not be good to take all of these in hand. It is the same in other branches of the textile industry, such as in embroidery or hosiery, etc., which altogether number around 150–160,000 businesses. Just think, so many thousands of businesses! But now imagine there are only 20,000 businesses. Managing even these bureaucratically would be a matter that would demand a lot of proper preparation, and could only very slowly be put into effect, if they could even be taken over successfully for the general public into state control at all.

Then the decorative arts and crafts. Here, taste, the talent for invention, etc., has a decisive influence. Besides this, creative activity also has a role to play. With that, socialisation runs into the greatest difficulties here. In these areas it is not the main purpose. For what is determinant for society is not form at all. Not this is the fundamental idea, but rather necessity. Only what proves necessary shall be socialised. Above all, you must remember that if we were to socialise everything in Germany (for I am speaking only about Germany, not about Switzerland), we would have to deal with around 3 million businesses in industry and trade alone. Even if you leave away 2 million of them, you can understand what that means all the same. If one does not socialise gradually, but rather at the same time in a large number of economic enterprises, then certain necessities also set in for the way of proceeding, namely a way that culminates in pure arbitrariness, which knows only violence and not right. Through this, socialisation would have the effect of creating great uncertainty and of harming the economy more than being useful for it. For that reason, I saw that we must reflect and proceed systematically, the legal way must be chosen for

socialisation, the legal way, which is not only the most humane but also the most secure and ultimately, if you take the entire economy into consideration, also the cheapest. Violent expropriation, by contrast, would very strongly unsettle our entire economic life and cause a great amount of damage, which would be far more strongly felt economically and ultimately would come out more expensive than the systematic path. Yet in this, one does not by any means have to leave everything to capital. One can still place general interests in the foreground.

Now certainly the form of societalisation [*Vergesellschaftung*] whereby the state or the community takes production in hand—or in the case of means of transport takes their operation in hand—is not the only form of societalisation. Many commit the great mistake of using the same term for various different things. Let us call what Engels and Marx conceive of as societalisation, comradely collective work [*genossenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit*] or cooperation… We want to apply the description societalisation to situations where the collectivity as state or community takes the place of the private enterprise.

If I am showing you the difficulties that counterpose themselves to the takeover of production by the state, then this is not yet to say that much cannot be socialised despite this. Of course, we are not tied to the form of the taking-over of the economy by the state itself. Already strong control by the general public, already its strong participation constitute far-reaching socialisation. We have such control through factory laws and through commercial safeguards [*Gewerbeschutz*]. Marx already said of the first beginnings of this development that they were the victory of a principle, of a new idea. If you go through the history of factory legislation, you will see how the factory-owners fought tooth and nail against this form of state intervention. They wanted nothing to do with it. Some of them from the firm conviction that the state should not interfere in these matters. The first interventions took place in England. Prince Bismarck was also a vigorous opponent of factory legislation. But precisely factory legislation is a step in the direction of intervention by the general community in production. Then, from this first modest attempt one went further to commercial safeguards. We have the various regulations, the arbitration courts, in England before the war we have already experienced the introduction of obligatory wage offices in various industries, which established minimum wages—something that was not previously recognised anywhere. We also have state interference in economic life in the determination of prices. These are all steps towards socialisation. In this way, socialisation can

proceed from another side far more comprehensively than is the case today where the state undertakes it itself.

Thus here with us in Germany a form of mixed economic enterprise has developed, where private and state enterprise have joined together, where the state has an influence on price determination. The state can even go further, namely by participating in business ventures. Then we have the compulsory syndicates [*Zwangssyndikate*]. They have been proposed by major industrialists. Major industrialists like Rathenau of the *Elektrizitätswerk zu Berlin*, a gigantic enterprise, outline the necessity of constructing compulsory syndicates, which would come and must come, with strong intervention by the state in price determination and in the profits generated. In this way the share of society and its control of production can certainly be systematically, gradually extended ever more strongly from various sides, without for that reason completely stymying the creative activity of the private enterprises. I believe, or even more I am of the opinion that it is not necessary at all, and that it will also not at all come to be that we are consigned to a single form of societal order. To completely lay aside creative force and accomplishments—no dogma demands this. It does not lie in the nature of the theory of Marx and Engels. Here speaks no necessity, no economic necessity.

We do not want to forget that the liberal epoch of the economy was also a mighty step forward, and brought along development infinitely further. Hence it is also neither necessary nor ever feasible to completely neutralise private production. Marx once mocked this idea when he became aware of a letter that defended this notion. A society that is to develop itself under the pressure of a revolution should develop itself into new forms, into a wealth of forms. It is not a matter of making everything uniform.

III

This is how I conceive of the path of socialisation. In this way we face the task more freely than if we tie ourselves to a single form of it, even if it has become popular. We may say: this form is dilettantism. But we may only socialise with the most exact knowledge of the nature of the economy. Only when we have scientifically studied the entire economy may we pursue politics, pursue practical politics, that is to say socialisation. We want to proceed systematically. We do not want to set back the economy by several years. We want to leave the creative activity of individuals some free

space. We can leave it room already because the task of socialisation has as a precondition so much exertion, and demands so much activity, and will take so much work, that we can be glad if we still have free enterprise alongside societal enterprise for a long time yet.

Notes

1. Robert Michels (1876–1936), German-Italian sociologist, initially a left-socialist and syndicalist, later convert to fascism, known as a founder of modern political science, especially the "iron law of oligarchy".
2. Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–83* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 81.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Marx – Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), p. 750.
4. Ibid., pp. 750–1.
5. Dieter Dowe and Kurt Klotzbach (eds.), *Programmatische Dokumente der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz, 1984), p. 188.
6. Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–83* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 325.
7. [Ed. B.—Eduard Bernstein has been since the Revolution an Assistant Secretary of State to the Reich Treasury in Germany.]
8. Carl Ballod (1864–1931), Latvian financial economist, demographer, statistician, and utopian thinker, influential theorist of civilian rationing. Heinrich Cunow (1862–1936), ethnologist, journalist, and social-democratic politician, Marxist theorist initially on the anti-revisionist left, later as a member of the Lensch–Cunow–Haenisch Group supporter of German interests and theorist of "war socialism" during WW1. Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941), Austrian-German publicist and social-democratic politician, twice Minister of Finance in the Weimar Republic (1923, 1928–1930), leading member of the Austromarxist theoretical tendency, foundational theorist of financial and monopoly capitalism. Otto Hue (1868–1922), German trade unionist and social-democratic politician, leader of the German mineworkers and prominent member of the Miners' International Federation (1904–1917), opposed proposals for far-reaching socialisation of the mining industry. Theodor Max Vogelstein (1880–1957), German banker and industrialist, co-founder of the DDP and leading member of the Society for Social Reform [*Gesellschaft für soziale Reform*] and the Association for Social Policy [*Verein für Sozialpolitik*]. Robert Wilbrandt (1875–1954), German economist and theorist of cooperative enterprise, representative of the "socialism of the chair" tendency.

PART III

Selected Articles

Check for updates

CHAPTER 17

A Piece of Materialist Propaganda-Writing

Neue Zeit 12/1(10) (November 1893), pp. 300–6.

"These days, it takes a not insubstantial dose of moral and personal courage to admit openly that one is an adherent of the philosophy of materialism or a materialist worldview"—this is how Herr Büchner begins and motivates his introduction to the work at hand.[1] In the face of the "physical and moral pressure" that the Church and the state under the Church's influence exercised, and the ignorance, illiteracy, and intellectual sluggishness of the great mass of the people, only a very small number of the many adherents of that worldview openly dared to declare themselves as such; and for that reason, every intellectual worker who possesses this courage must be greeted with joy, and they must be given every possible support.

It is correct that the number of *those who profess* materialist theories is today significantly lower than the number of *adherents* of materialist views. But it is wrong only to hold the state and the Church and the ignorance of the masses responsible for this. In most modern countries, the Church barely has any power to exert what Büchner calls "physical pressure" anymore, and the moral pressure too which it is able to exercise is not all that terrible, at least in the cities. Likewise—apart from in Russia—the state does not forbid anybody from declaring themselves in favour of any given worldview; and if in the awarding of positions and dignities it prefers those who confess positive religions, then firstly, that only affects those who are

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reliant on such positions, and these, however great their number may be, still only represent a fraction of the population; and secondly, this is for the most part today only a secondary phenomenon, only the consequence of the fact that the societal class that sets the tone in public life—the bourgeoisie, which is at least *partly* in charge of government—willingly tolerates, or even supports, this indirect disadvantaging of those who hold anticlerical worldviews. To each his own; after already naming the Church, alongside it he should have named not the state influenced by the *Church* but rather the state influenced by *capitalism*, or rather capitalism and its influence, as the impediment to free confession.

It does not need to be determined whether ignoring such a crucial and notorious factor of retrogressive tendencies in our epoch is only down to forgetfulness or whether he did so consciously. Even in the former case, it cannot be overlooked in a man who occupies such a preeminent place among the propagandists of natural-scientific materialism as Herr Professor Büchner. It bears a concerning witness to the scientificity that he claims to represent if already his opening sentences, leaving aside turns of phrase of such dubious logic as "moral and personal courage", depict the characteristic phenomena of the time in falsifying vagueness.

So if we must reject as very antiquated Herr Büchner's elaborations about courage, of which the book at hand is meant to be an example, then with that it does not occur to us at all to deny its author the predicate of moral courage entirely. Certainly, he risked neither a Church pyre nor the state's prisons when he wrote it; but he nonetheless took it upon himself to row against the broad current of so-called public opinion, and that is in any case to be appreciated. All the more since Herr Strecker shows himself in his book to be free of all cheap sensationalism. It is written in a thoroughly unpretentious way; nowhere do we come across the rebarbative manner of the radicalising authorship of our days, of wanting to scintillate with cheap slogans and baffling paradoxes; rather, he oozes warm, honest, deeply-felt conviction.

This conviction is that of a materialist view of nature and life. "No god, o Man, has called you into existence; no good genius spreads its hand protectively over your head; no providence accompanies you on your way through life! Vain illusion, disproven through the experiences of every day, is your eternal justice, a figment of your fantasy is your eternal life! In vain do you search for a higher purpose of your existence—it has no determination, no more than the whole world itself has one"—so it says

in the introduction. Then he refers to the expected eventual extinction of all life on Earth, which considerably reduces the sense of at least being able to eternalise oneself in one's works; as well as to the fact that even the consolation that lies in good action and self-sacrifice for one's fellow humans is tarnished by the realisation that these actions too stem from *self-love*, and that *freedom of will* is only an *illusion*. Science too holds disappointment in readiness for those who dedicate themselves to it. The further and deeper he penetrates into analysing the world and its matter, the more certain becomes his conviction that limits are placed on his enquiry which he will never be in a position to overcome.—Herr Strecker's book set out to answer the questions that arise from this realisation for the evaluation of human life and endeavour, and this answer or these answers "are founded on the belief in the *reality* of the *sensuous world*". Certainly, the examination comes across things in nature that cannot be explained; nevertheless, "where knowledge abandons us, we return to faith [*Glaube*] and in that way create the ground on which we take a firm stance, amidst the bustle of the world". Only we do not believe in contradictions in nature; rather, we trust "that the undisturbed conformity to laws that we observe in the domain of experience also retains its validity beyond its borders".[2]

From the cited passages emerges already fairly clearly the standpoint of the author, which is in principle natural-philosophical—though this term is not to be understood in the traditional sense. Only the word "faith" is misleading here; likewise, overall we cannot spare Herr Strecker from the accusation that he has not always expressed himself with the unambiguity that the object of his examination demands. If, as he says in the foreword, "out of regard for the beauty, the dignity, and the wealth of our mother tongue" he sought as far as possible to avoid using foreign words, then we have nothing whatsoever to object to this. But then at the same time he should have made sufficient use of this *wealth* of our mother tongue in practice, since it has better words for "hypothesis" than the word "faith", which expresses a completely different concept. The adherent of a supernatural theory of the world "has faith", the priests of the various religions today generally more or less grant the validity of what has been proven by science, and say with the same words as Herr Strecker: "but where knowledge abandons us, we return to faith". But—and here we must protect him against himself—in the chapters which concern themselves with the problems of genesis and the phenomena of existence, he does not in any

way "return to faith" where knowledge abandons him, but rather he "infers", "assumes", or says explicitly: "we do not know that". Certainly, one could now say that the assumption of a logically-deduced but not yet positively proven and perhaps never provable fact is as much an article of faith as the conviction of the correctness of the Mosaic story of Creation or the Resurrection of Christ after the Crucifixion. Yet in fact it is not the same. Even if, thanks to deficient instruments, neither Galle nor any other astronomer had found the planet Neptune, Le Verrier's assumption, based on observations of the movements of Uranus, that there had to be another planet beyond that one, would not lie on the same level as the assumption that the Miracles of Jesus told in the Gospels really took place in that way.[3]

Herr Strecker is only carrying out understandable self-criticism when he writes that the materialist worldview as a closed system does not always find itself on the ground of firmly-standing facts ("firmly-established" would perhaps be a better way of putting it). But he makes far too far-reaching a concession to scepticism and to spiritualist theories when he speaks of a "domain to be left to *faith*" and continues: "Materialism *has faith* [*glaubt*] in the objective validity of our concepts of *time* and *space*; it *has faith* in the *atom*; it *trusts* in the unchangeable efficacy of the *law of causality*."[4] And immediately afterwards he himself proves the pointlessness of this weak-hearted way of expressing himself when, after he next establishes once again that materialism proceeds from knowledge won through *experience*, and that it has as its linchpin the law of causality derived from experience, he continues:

> The strength of materialism … lies in its conformity to the *demands of life*. In the domain of practical action, scepticism and idealism are not able to sustain their doctrines; here, they must acknowledge the factuality of a corporeal world that exists beyond the thinking spirit, and thereby relinquish the applicability of their doctrines in life. … Who will formulate intentions, make plans, and bring them to fruition if they doubt the causal connection of what happens in the world? … Materialism is really only the translation of the fundamental principles according to which we judge and act in daily life to how we regard the world in general.[5]

Similarly—only more precisely, and not interrupted by continued regressions into the metaphysical way of thinking—Marx writes as early as 1845:

> The chief defect of all previous materialism … is that things, reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object*, or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity*, *practice*, not subjectively. … Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity. … The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question.[6]

No human has ever seen the atom, and presumably nobody will ever get to see it either; but the chemist, the researcher in the field of physical phenomena, etc., base their experiments, their demonstrations, their calculations on its existence, and practice proves them right every time. Hence, it is a very skewed way of putting things if one speaks of "faith" in the atom.

Strecker's elucidations about space and time, especially their infinitude [*Unendlichkeit*], also contain very controversial material. He distinguishes between the world, filled [*erfüllt*] space, and the *empty* space that stretches out beyond this, and only attributes infinitude to the latter. "The world as filled space must have a limit and a certain form." Herr Strecker believes that it poses no difficulties for us to imagine an ultimately finite world in an infinite space. We want to challenge that. The difficulty does not decrease at all with the material content that we give this space—in our view, infinite empty space can be imagined without contradiction no more than infinite filled space. As regards to time, Herr Strecker agonises over his attempt to make sense of the question of how the movement of the material that fills the world had its beginning. Only from the point at which such movement and with it change in conditions began to take place did time in our sense of the word exist, but it is impossible to conceive of filled time as retrogressively infinite; one could never reach from the infinite to the finite, no more than a bottomless pit could ever be filled up.[7] Here, Herr Strecker seems to follow Dühring, but not to the advantage of the object he is trying to explain. For who tells him that we now find ourselves in "the finite"? That is not written anywhere. And as far as the "bottomless pit" is concerned, then Herr Strecker might kindly only dig one and then examine it, and he will find material content everywhere, even if not exactly in a firm state of aggregation. But he will never fully manage to empty this "bottomless pit" of content, and transform it into an "empty space". And this is precisely the task he sets himself with his theory of letting "filled" time emerge from unfilled—"empty"—time.

Incidentally, at least he openly admits that, in the way in which he poses the problem, "only pure idealism" has the ability to solve it—only it can "build a bridge between rest and movement"—and that the transition from a state of absolute lack of movement, which has existed for an infinite amount of time, to that of movement without external cause is impossible to explain. He throws his claim that filled time must have had a beginning into disarray with his final remark that how the retrogressive eternity of the world should be imagined remains "an open question for the materialist worldview". So we can make use of our right, and imagine that this movement was always there, and is an eternal process.

What Herr Strecker says about the alleged genesis of the Earth and of life on it does not provoke any counterargument worth nothing. When he moves on to humanity, he displays a disturbing tendency now and again to generalise very ahistorically, but this is mostly only the result of his unconsidered use of expressions and turns of phrase from representatives of deeply unmaterialistic worldviews. Herr Strecker is enough of a disciple of the theory of development, and has enough anthropological knowledge at his disposal, to recognise the concept of morality, or right, etc., as something that grew into being. Yet even so, he manages to say that the older Brutus, who imposed the death penalty on his own sons because they had participated in a conspiracy against the state, certainly provided an unsurpassed and oft-admired example of love for justice, but had acted "against natural and human sentiment".[8] But the love of a father for his adult sons above all else is first and foremost no "natural" sentiment, and as a "human" sentiment it likewise belongs only to particular stages of development. Much, much later still, and at very high relative stages of development, fathers have sacrificed their sons, and *vice versa* sons their fathers to *raison d'état*, if not exactly out of love for justice. At other points, meanwhile, Herr Strecker happens to evaluate matters somewhat too much as a natural scientist. His polemic against natural rights is only correct so far as this is derived from an imaginary natural state of humanity, but he entirely disregards the fact that, in general, this justification for natural rights has long since given way to a derivation from historically-cultivated concepts of right.

However, we cannot follow Herr Strecker in the details of his explications. He answers the question about materialism's stance towards the circumstances and happenings in the realm of the life of peoples by saying that, "as such", as a system of views about nature and life, it forms no political party and finds its explicit representation in none. He may well

have followers in all parties—except for the religious ones—but they are primarily found among the ranks of the free-thinking [*freisinnig*] parties, including the socialist one. His proof that the translation of fundamental materialist principles into the political domain and their logical expansion lead to conclusions that align with the demands of the latter parties is not always right. Hence, e.g., because Herr Strecker almost exclusively starts from *natural-scientific* materialism, he is suddenly forced here to revert to the natural-rights theories that he himself has rejected; and if he thinks that materialism must in all cases reject despotism and *absolute* monarchy, then he forgets Hobbes, among others. Yet we have no reason to be dissatisfied with the final *results* of his examination. These amount directly and explicitly to socialism.

Without giving any opinion on the value of the various socialist theories, Strecker develops quite a convincing account of the reasons that, in his view, speak in favour of the socialist reorganisation of society. If, in doing so, he proceeds in a somewhat eclectic way, then this may be precisely appropriate for the audience he is targeting. He engages in detail with Bellamy's utopia and remarks in his critique of it quite rightly that elaborating the constitution of a communist state will be the outcome of historical events and can therefore not be prescribed today.[9] What he himself says about the possible or probable trajectory of future development is not always without blemish, but for all that also contains many noteworthy arguments. He speaks very candidly about the expropriation of the expropriators, and he dispatches Proudhon's claim that the socialist state means the exploitation of the strong by the weak very well by explaining that no societal order that conforms even only slightly with the demands of reason and fairness can approach the distribution of foodstuffs to its members solely according to the fundamental principle "a good servant must have good wages [*wie die Arbeit, so der Lohn*]".

In the final paragraphs of his book, Strecker casts a further glance at the alleged prospects of the human race in the distant future, and then goes into the ethics of materialism and his evaluation of life. Regarding the first, he does not offer humanity a particularly favourable prognosis; he fears the effects of burgeoning overpopulation, specifically the exhaustion of subterranean resources—problems that he wishes the wisdom of our descendants may prove capable of addressing, but which he seems to have little hope will ever be solved in a permanently-satisfying way. His evaluation of life in general is even more sceptical, in fact comes very close to pessimism.

> If one asks about the value of life in general, then it is my view—though I do not express it in the name of materialism—that it would by all accounts be better if the entire human race with its illnesses and death, its aberrations and vices, its laws and punishments, with the continued struggle of humans among one another, and the torments that they perpetrate against each other—that this human race had never emerged, and the same applies for all sentient life in general.[10]

But now we are here, and since on top of that we are necessitated by almost superhuman forces—our inherited mettle, etc.—to endure our existence and sustain our kind, it is a demand of reason to arrange this existence as bearably as possible, and to aspire to the living situation that seems best out of all those that can be attained.

> For that reason, materialism separates itself again and again from pessimism, however much individual adherents of the former may also come close to the latter.
>
> Materialism manifests *in action*; it sees better conditions before itself and works to bring them about. The factors that determine the lot of humanity and of individual humans are divided into two kinds; one of them encompasses overwhelmingly powerful, almost incalculable natural necessities, which in the best case we can more or less divert and weaken, but in the face of which we are habitually fairly powerless; the other kind consists in human institutions and measures whose character proceeds from human will. Hence it is primarily towards these that the attention of practical materialism is turned, and through whose expedient formation it hopes to be able to ease and brighten the fate of coming humankind. …
>
> A bright, warm ray of light casting consolation and refreshment shines into the monstrously tragic game as which the history of humanity presents itself. This is the *love for one's own kind*, which fights to be externalised in humans through the achievement of a higher state of culture, first dully and uncertainly, then ever more clearly and surely of its goal, and which amidst all the persecutions and torments which humans impose on one another has still never entirely been extinguished.

This feeling and the urge to speak beyond the limits of one's own existence with beings in the distant future who feel the same, and to live on in their consciousness and in their grateful remembrance, speaks to us from the monuments of art and science that have been passed down to us,

> and hence we also endeavour—we whose entire intellectual capacity and whose civilised enjoyments rest on the work of all the humans who preceded us—to hand on the inheritance we have received to posterity, multiplied by new efforts, with the wish and the hope that the achievements of human work become ennobled to the blessing of their owners, until overwhelmingly powerful causes put an end to the further life and flourishing of humanity. May we eventually gain the recognition that we always wanted the best and achieved the most that was possible.

With that, Strecker ends. In this discussion, we have above all emphasised points on which we disagree with him, and we must add that we could add yet more to them. We also cannot go without remarking that if Herr Strecker did not restrict himself exclusively to natural-scientific materialism, but rather wanted to deal with the entire materialist worldview, he should not have ignored the materialist conception of history under any circumstances. All the same, we still believe that we can recommend his work as a popular introduction to the principles and the problems of materialism. It stays objective throughout, and yet is suffused with warm conviction; it is not officious anywhere and yet almost always engaging; it is no dogma, but a grippingly-written explanation and defence of materialism.

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—Wilhelm Strecker, *The World and Humanity: An Explanation of the Materialist Worldview, with an Introduction by Prof. Dr. Ludwig Büchner*. Leipzig, Max Spohr. XV and 243 p.].
2. Strecker, p. 8.
3. Urbain Le Verrier (1811–1877), French astronomer and mathematician, specialising in celestial mechanics, who predicted the position of Neptune in a memoir presented to the Paris *Académie des sciences* in June 1846. Johann Gottfried Galle (1812–1910), German astronomer, first person to view Neptune in September 1846, located within 1° of the discovery position predicted by Le Verrier's calculations.
4. Strecker, p. 14.
5. Strecker, pp. 14–15.
6. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 5: Marx and Engels 1845–47* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 3.
7. Strecker, p. 26.

8. Lucius Junius Brutus (d. 509 B.C.), according to tradition the founder of the Roman Republic, thwarted an attempt by the deposed royal family of Rome to regain the throne—the Tarquinian conspiracy. Two of the conspirators were Brutus' sons Titus Junius Brutus and Tiberius Junius Brutus, and Brutus *père* became an iconic figure among later republicans, especially during the Enlightenment, for having both his sons executed as punishment for undermining the Republic.
9. Edward Bellamy (1850–1898), American journalist, writer, and activist best known for the novel *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888), which describes a future USA that has solved the problems of capitalism by transforming into a socialist utopia. Easily one of the most influential and best-selling works of its time, its ethical anti-capitalism bears resemblances to early-nineteenth-century utopian socialism. It inspired a host of approving and critical responses, including William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), as well as a short-lived "Bellamyite" movement in the 1880s–1890s.
10. Strecker, p. 240.

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CHAPTER 18

Right and Justice

Neue Zeit 12/1(12–13) (December 1893), pp. 357–61, 396–402.

Right and justice—how often these words are used, and yet how ambiguous they are, and how few people are wont to give a more precise account of their content! Perhaps least of all those who use them the most. Many speak of right where they simply have in mind here a mere demand for apparent fairness, there a claim crafted from positive law, however unfair this claim may seem to others. And how many people declaim Goethe's phrase, or rather the phrase put by Goethe in Mephisto's mouth—

> Of inborn law in which each man has part,
> Of that, unfortunately, there's no question.[1]—

who, when confronted with the task of defining this inborn right, of which—and "unfortunately"!—there is never any question, either do not have anything precise to say about it, or instead reel off a plethora of demands, which, however laudable they may seem, still cannot be shown to be "inborn" right. But if we ask even after the meaning of the word justice, then most people will in turn probably talk about what they consider to be just with regard to certain questions, but on closer inspection it will turn out that some of them apply quite dissimilar criteria to these various questions, whereas others do so to help themselves overcome the problem that they readily derive the concept of justice from that of a quite

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M. S. Ostrowski, *Eduard Bernstein on Socialism Past and Present*,
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mechanical conception of equality, which thus leads to entirely nonsensical consequences.

This variety to the point of arbitrariness in the interpretation of these concepts has, on the other hand, given rise to sceptical appraisals of them, leading almost to a direct denial of their applicability. But every scepticism that comes down to nothing more than mere denial is unfruitful; flat denial in such matters is just as arbitrary as uncritical affirmation. To say that there is no inborn right, that there is no such thing as justice, is to surpass even rhetorical appeals to eternal justice in hollowness, since in fact today in civilised countries everyone is recognised as having certain rights, and the common nature of conceptions of right or justice is already proof that they are more than just the figments of individual delusions.

Here, others chime in and say: "We admit that conceptions of right and concepts of justice are not purely individual; they are social phenomena and as such are products of historical development. But since all historical development hitherto has played out in and by means of class struggles, and society is based on class differences even today, so too conceptions of right and justice are rooted in the given economic conditions of the various classes in society. Since these conditions are different for each class, each class's conceptions of right are different too. It is hence nonsensical to use these terms in any other way than as an expression of the perspectives and demands of individual classes."

That already sounds a lot more plausible, and seems to align thoroughly with the fundamental ideas of the materialist conception of history, which after all is built on recognising class struggles as the specific peculiar feature and driving force of historical development hitherto. Up to a certain point, it is also entirely consistent with it as well. But one should not interpret the matter all too formulaically. One should not assume that if one utters the words class or class struggle one has already said everything that there is to say, that one can save oneself any further examination, any explanation and consideration of the *particular* historical circumstances. The more the materialist conception of history asserts itself and becomes generally established, we must warn people off all the more from such an application of the theory, which may certainly be very convenient, but is also at the same time highly deceptive. The most accurate theory can be distorted into dreadful falsehood, into rhetoric that befogs the senses through one-sided interpretation, and so in this area too good sense can turn into nonsense. Class struggle is an indisputable fact, but there is class struggle and class struggle of two different sorts. It differs depending on the nature of classes, which are themselves subject to historical

development. It differs, that is, it plays out in different forms depending on the economic structure of society, and it varies depending on the level of general cultural development.

That something like this is the case, that the history of humanity does not show conflict taking place in an unchanging cycle over territorial dominions and prerogatives of rule; that partly alongside these conflicts, but also for the greatest part caused by them, a gradual intellectual and moral development has taken place, both concerning the recognition of the laws of nature and with that its increasing subjugation, as well as the recognition of the laws of society's existence itself; that along with this development the forms of intercourse from person to person have also developed, and indeed developed progressively overall, so that, e.g., if civilisation lacks the extensive solidarity that prevails in a tribe of wild men, in lieu of that it has simply extended the recognition of mutual rights and duties gradually to an ever wider circle of fellow humans, and paved the way for a far higher solidarity than that of the tribe—all of that no reasonable person can deny, and every theory of history whose necessary consequence was denying this development would be wrong. If its opponents claim this about the materialist conception of history, then only because they have incorrectly interpreted it, and it is likewise an incorrect interpretation to wish to trace the moral and legal concepts of the present back solely to the class struggles and class contradictions playing out in society today. What is right is only that these struggles have had a modifying effect in the most divergent directions on conventional conceptions of right, but beyond that it is not to be forgotten that they are themselves influenced by those conceptions of right as the products of earlier class struggles. Without the radical transformation of production from manual crafts and manufacturing to large-scale industry, and in particular the subjection of the rights of the former to the laws of the latter, the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie would be simply unthinkable. But just as the bourgeois idea of equality is the ideational expression of the aforementioned transformation, so it is at the same time the ideational starting-point for the revolutionary struggles of the modern proletariat. And both by virtue of the fact that only the worker who internalises this idea can exchange the conservative sense of one's own estate [*Standesgefühl*], of being a member of a certain discrete occupation, for the far wider revolutionary class consciousness, and also that by now bourgeois equality—nominal equality before the law—is opposed by economic inequality in bourgeois society, that from the former derives the demand to eliminate the effects of the latter, i.e., ultimately radically transform the capitalist

societal order overall into the socialist one. We recognise this transformation as a historical necessity through our insight into the workings of the economic foundations of capitalist society, but it becomes economic *fact* through the conscious intervention of the proletariat, which receives one of its most powerful impetuses by comparing the economic position of the worker with their formal-legal status in society.

In other words: the rights concepts and conceptions of justice of modern bourgeois society are the product of a long historical development, and as such are, by and large, superior to those of earlier societal conditions. Socialism is certainly critical of them, but in the spirit of their further development, which corresponds to the economic revolution it represents. So long as this revolution has not been completed, in accordance with the particular class situation of the proletariat, its practical conclusions regarding what right and justice require will deviate quite substantially from those of the bourgeois class, but despite that they will draw on the advanced conceptions of right that have already been attained. Insofar, and if one keeps this in mind, the appeal to right and justice is thus not merely rhetorical.

Let us take an example. The right to life has been respected to very varying degrees in different periods of history. From the time where this right was only granted to fellow-members of one's own tribe—and not unconditionally even to these (e.g., through abandonment of weakling children, killing of those weakened by old age)—where those outside the tribe were wholly without rights, up until the present day of modern civilised states, we find the greatest variety of conceptions of the right of the human being to live out their life to the fullest extent of their physical strength. Even today it is not unconditional. It is infringed by the legal death penalty, in obligatory military service, and in the punishment of cowardice under military law, etc., and so far as it is even legally guaranteed at all, it is by no means protected evenly everywhere in practice. Class contradictions, national prejudices, material interests and other idiosyncrasies that spread sporadically frequently become causes for all kinds of exceptions. Bourgeois juries have acquitted landowners and factory-owners who have killed their workers, or let them go with purely nominal punishments; juries or judges of one country have let murder perpetrated against members of a particularly despised foreign country go unpunished even in peacetime. European adventurers were able to murder African natives by the score without being regarded as murderers by the majority

of their fellow-countrymen, let alone being seriously held to account, and husbands who killed their wives if they were suspected or convicted of infidelity were acquitted just like women who did the same to their defilers. But these and other exceptions do not alter the fact that in general today the recognition of the right to life has been developed to a level that no earlier time has ever seen. And even if one cannot completely endorse some individual applications of this principle, if the consequences derived from it can in certain cases in practice take the form of a *life sentence*, it is overall still a great advance, and the working class is no less thoroughly interested in preserving it than any other societal class.[2] Many of its demands today are based on it—one should only think of legal liability, and of factory and other forms of hygiene—and in the struggle for its further aspirations it draws from it no scant moral encouragement. The right to health protections, the right to a life associated with pleasure are ultimately only further inferences from the right to life as it is already accepted in principle today, but is only insufficiently realised due to the class character of existing society. There has been repression and exploitation at the most various times, and likewise efforts to counter them, but the victory of socialism is nearest not where the life, personal freedom, etc., of the human being as a human being are valued and protected the least, but rather where these rights have gained the widest application.

For that reason it is also extremely fatuous if people delude themselves that the murder of political opponents, organising assassinations by dynamite, etc., are straightforward proofs of radical sentiment and are means of revolutionary struggle in all circumstances. They are hardly these at all, so much so that wherever they were not preceded by extraordinary pressure from the other side, and they were thus only a manifestation of so-called frontier justice, which possesses no other means of effectively asserting its injured right, they can have either no effect on the actual situation at all or only make matters worse. If shooting and blowing people up on the one hand, and beheading or hanging on the other were to become a habit, the opportunity would easily arise to bring about a situation similar to the rule of force [*Faustrecht*] for some time, but one would then only be even further away from socialist society. It is one of the many contradictions of so-called anarchism that, though in theory it preaches the most untrammelled apotheosis of the individual, it in practice it leads to the reduction of all rights of the individual to a single one, and the most doubtful one of all at that—i.e., precisely the right of force.

Let us return to our object after the digression we have made. What do we mean when we refer to right and justice—without thinking of certain paragraphs of positive law when we do so?

This question is discussed in the most stimulating way in a small work which has as its author a teacher of jurisprudence, Professor Ph. Lotmar in Bern.[3] Lotmar addresses it, as the work's title indicates, in two separate essays, which however are not only connected by their joint publication alongside one another, but thoroughly complement each other in their primary fundamental ideas. Both are, as Lotmar remarks in a short preface, aimed at the "demolition of imaginary fundamental concepts", in the sense of the legal philosopher Ludwig Knapp.[4]

In the first address, Lotmar starts with Mephisto's well-known saying about jurisprudence, the final lines of which were cited at the start of this article. The controversial question of whether Goethe put his own opinion about jurisprudence in Mephisto's mouth, whether he even suddenly lets him reveal "with fine, audacious inconsistency" (Bischer) the "louder spirit of the century of revolutions", or whether the bit in question is merely to be regarded as misleading mockery, is settled for Lotmar in the sense that Mephisto, as a "fellow who *goads* and influences", shows his pupil precisely the dark side of legal theory, to prejudice him against it, which he then also achieved; and that also, as far as this dark side is concerned, Mephisto's statement is entirely *true*, but that the rebuke contained within it nonetheless does not strike home against jurisprudence. For this does not have the task of *creating* right at all, but instead only has to explain what right already *is*. The right that is *inborn* in us, which thus is supposed to be due to us not as members of a certain state association, whose legal order already exists at our birth and is foisted upon us, but rather simply as human beings—which in the form of "human rights" is *prima facie* not yet widely accepted at all or accepted only inadequately—has no instituted executive that enforces its realisation. This speculative right fights for its legitimacy *outside* jurisprudence. During revolutions (Lotmar points to Müntzer's Revolt, the secession of the Netherlands, the English Revolution), it appears in various guises and seeks to win for itself impactful appeal.[5] Separated from the critique of actual legal scholarship, Mephisto's statement is hence false. It was all along and still is now a question of our inborn right. It already appears in Greek philosophy. But far more than the theorists, it has preoccupied "the politicians of practice, the classes and estates, parties and peoples". However, the content of this imagined "right" was by no means the same at all times. If the idea of such

a right already required certain historical preconditions, then its individual applications also arise every time under certain historical preconditions.

> The conception and desire for a right to work, e.g., cannot emerge in a community based on slavery, rather it presumes our bourgeois society, maintained through wage-labour. … The natural right to property in land cannot awaken in a static society (*mir*, domestic community), where every member has the share of land that satisfies their needs within their reach.[6]

Some of the "rights of man" proclaimed by the French Revolution, in turn, refer directly to the just-abolished *ancien régime*, and are meant to make apparent its invalidity, as is also said explicitly straightaway.

Lotmar divides "inborn rights" into two groups: those which, like the right to expression of opinion, the right to free choice of occupation, the explicit right—in the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*—to resist arbitrary acts of violence, the right to revolution, etc., still treat the human as citizen of a state; and the group of much further- and deeper-reaching rights where it is immediately a matter of protecting the human individual, and the human is mostly conceived of without regard to their state citizenship: the right to life, the right to freedom in contrast to slavery, the right to work and existence, the shared right to the bounties of nature, the right to education, the right to leisure, and ultimately the right to happiness as "the right of the human to such a situation that they may be able to purely develop their own nature and live it to its fullest".

The fewest of these right have gained legitimate acceptance as "born human rights" so far that they are expressly recognised in constitutions, and even for these few, the provisions that have been met for their realisation are deficient, and likewise their penetration of positive law. But so far as they have not been translated into it—as absolute human rights they are likewise only *notional* rights, just like those that have not yet been recognised at all. But even if they have also not been accepted in jurisprudence, and if likewise legal philosophy does not recognise the dogma of "inborn right", then the conception of such a right, or rather of a number of such rights, is nonetheless of great historical and practical value. In it is reflected the level of peoples' social development, in it the advocacy of practical demands finds significant support: a demand for which the conviction exists that it is rooted in a natural right will in some circumstances be fought for with quite different strength than one that only appears as the expression of some wish. Despite its mere imaginary nature, "inborn

right" is not also therefore to be mistaken for morality, which appeals to people's consciences. Its propositions form

> external claims, directed at *other people*, if necessary also to be fulfilled by subjugating those who resist them.[7] …
>
> And as imagined right it is at the same time germinating right, it serves to rejuvenate prevailing right, which becomes antiquated while the world strides forwards.[8]

Richer in content than the first essay is the second, which deals with justice. The appeal to justice is even more common than the appeal to right, especially when one considers that very often people say "right" when they mean "justice". Almost everyone believes or claims that they are just, and everyone expects or demands justice. But wherein does justice consist, where is the criterion that lets us discern whether a verdict, a measure, a demand is just?

Lotmar next opposes the opinion which, *inter alia*, has found its expression in a statement by the famous Roman jurist Ulpian, that justice and lawfulness [*Rechtmäßigkeit*] coincide, so that the former consists in guaranteeing everyone their right.[9] If right is taken as the epitome of legally-established statutes of right, then according to that, every judgment that conforms to these would be just, and yet precisely such judgments have often been the highest injustice—*summum jus summa injuria*—while judgments have been praised as just which contradicted the right that prevailed at that exact time; and that cannot come as a surprise if one knows how positive law came about. However, this criterion already forsakes us within the actual sphere of right as soon as we turn to the question of gauging punitive sentences, etc. For various misdemeanours and crimes, the law prescribes minimum and maximum sentences—so, e.g., for fraud, theft, etc., imprisonment from 1 to 1826 days—but within these limits, the judge has freedom of determination; thus, a judge acts in accordance with the law if they condemn a poor devil who has perhaps stolen a pair of boots to the same sentence as the banker who has embezzled funds entrusted to them. Do they act justly by doing so? Or do they act justly if they make the punishment dependent on the quantity of the defrauded sum, so that the speculator who through exaggerated representation of their chances of gain has made a moneyed man participate in a speculative scheme to the tune of 100,000 marks would be punished 100 times more severely than the marriage impostor who wheedles a poor

serving-maid out of 1000 marks, half her life-savings?[10] But the appeal to justice is famously not at all restricted to the cases that land before the criminal or civil judge. It also reaches further than these *and* further than the cases that lie for judgment before the art critic, the literary reviewer, the historian, etc. It also follows in the evaluation of favours, presents, etc., of contracts, of objective living conditions, and so on.

Hence if one describes as justice simply the allocation or adjudgment to everyone of what is due to them, regardless of whether it is a matter of applying norms of right or not, whereby justice is then given a further-reaching *and* deeper function, then the further question arises of whether anyone deserves something because of what they do or do not do as such at all. Lotmar unfolds in an account that is as compact as it is vivid the reasons that speak against accepting free will, and which hence lead one to answer the question in the negative. We cannot go in detail into this account, which certainly belongs to the most splendid parts of the work. Here, we shall only extract from it the favourable appraisal of Shelley, set out in a footnote, as a thinker who—in an annotation to Queen Mab—said one of the most significant things that had ever been uttered on this question.[11] Schopenhauer did not mention Shelley when listing his precursors in his prize-winning work about the freedom of will, but the man surpassed even Schopenhauer in the argument in question, insofar as in its conclusions he "does not open a back door to metaphysics".[12] Many of those who have recognised the necessity of human action certainly do not shy away from denying either desert or original responsibility—i.e. one not initially imposed by human beings—and cause themselves and others quite a headache in trying to deduce these after all; a problem that, Lotmar thinks, plays well-nigh the same role in the field of ethics as squaring the circle does in mathematics and the *perpetuum mobile* does in mechanics.

Solely from the fact that human actions necessarily work out every time, we may conclude that the advantages or disadvantages that they bring to their author as such cannot be reduced to justice *qua* the *allocation* of what is owed, but not that they could not be justified at all. Right and morality are neither purely natural nor logical, but only a *practical* necessity or *expediency*. From the *concept* of theft does not follow by any means that it is to be punished, and that the murderer should be punished is no demand of justice. The coercive force of right [*Rechtszwang*] is necessary only under the condition that a certain purpose has been posited that should be achieved, which it is more suited to achieving than anything else. The fact that punishment is associated with some action acts as a

motivation not to carry it out, and only fails where stronger contrary motives work against it; these can consist of particular plight, pathological excitability, etc., or also in the fact that the action is held to be more just than the punishment imposed on it. But the threat of punishment is not the only motivation that dissuades people from carrying out actions that are frowned upon. Besides the individual's own view about the reprehensibility of their action, the awareness that the general public or the part of it whose judgment the individual happens to value considers it reprehensible also militates against carrying them out, and this power of public opinion is already today—one could also say with a nod to original communism: again—strong enough perhaps likewise to prevent rape, fraud, etc., as much as the Criminal Code. But it would achieve still far greater things if the uncertainty of earnings, the furious struggle over existence, and class differences and class contradictions did not have a countervailing effect in society today. Just as class differences have a differentiating effect on the practice of right, so too they prevent the existence of an ethics that agrees in all points. The prevailing morality is the morality of the ruling classes, or rather, where their rule is already a conditional one, the morality recognised by them. From right and morality—which have been cultivated by humanity in view of its practical purposes in a process of development that has gone on for thousands of years—is first derived what is due to each person. And even what the prescriptions of morality demand in this respect will by no means always appear as justice. The prescription to repay evil with good may be highly commendable for many cases, but it is not a demand of justice.

If the conception of justice as a principle of allocating what is due to everyone in and of themselves is not sustainable, then it is totally fruitless to make the concept dependent on what seems to be just to interested individuals or groups themselves. There is only one characteristic by which to recognise the nature of justice, and this consists—as was already laid out by the towering Greek thinker Aristotle—in *equality*, which itself will certainly mostly be a *relative* one: *comparative* [*verhältnismäßig*] *equality*. Justice does not demand that the killing of human beings is punished, but if a society finds it expedient to punish it, then justice demands that *all* are punished who make themselves guilty of doing it. It does not forbid graduating the punishment according to the circumstances under which the killing takes place, but it demands that these graduations are applied to *all people*. And so too in other questions, whether it is a matter of allocating burdens or advantages.

> Justice does not decide about the *that* nor about the *what* of allocation, but only about the *how much*, when it is already established that and what should be allocated; it is not productive but rather normative, thus it does not form a source, a motor of right or of morality, but a guideline, a yardstick, a scale.[13]

That may disappoint many people, and even so it guarantees the only possibility of wresting the concept of justice away from arbitrary interpretation and thereby from ineffectiveness. Also, restricting justice to relative equality of treatment in no way means perpetuating or endorsing existing inequalities in personal conditions. These conditions do not hang in the air, and do not draw their nourishment from supernatural sources. They themselves are rooted in conditions that are subject to historical development, and with their development the judgment of humans about their expediency and about their conformity with the principle of relative equality changes as well.

> Where the present sees equality and hence demands equal treatment, the past has seen differences in accordance with which it allowed differences of treatment to arise.[14]

In *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, in the section on "Equality", Fr. Engels has cited Lotmar in another context—albeit one whose line of thought is retained here—and has shown how the conception of equality gradually gains ever more ground with the development of the mode of production. A phrase that similarly belongs to our topic can be found in the foreword to the German edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy*, and I want to make Lotmar aware of it all the more because it helps dispel a reservation that Lotmar necessarily seems to have towards the materialist conception of history. He accepts it to the extent that he lets legal and political institutions and the way of thought conforming to them depend "*primarily* on the economic activity of the respective society", but adds in a note that according to the so-called (!) materialist conception of history, this was "not just primarily but rather *exclusively* the case".[15] If this is to say that this theory does not recognise the contribution of ethical conceptions at all, then it is decidedly wrong; it only says that the relations of production determine legal, etc., institutions and ideas in the *last*, *decisive instance*. For such institutions and ideas tend already to be expressed in the relations of production themselves—e.g., in modern wage-labour rather than in guild labour—which for the most part

are products of prior development. The attribute "exclusively" is not used by any representative of the materialist conception of history in this context, nor certainly the word "primarily", because this again describes the relationship in terms that are far too uncertain. Thus, the addition "so-called" can only be accepted insofar as Lotmar himself does not judge that conception of history quite correctly. Had he thought about it some more, then he would perhaps have enriched his work by examining why, even though he formulated the principle correctly, Aristotle again still came to apply it in ways whose contradictions he, Lotmar, so fittingly laid bare. Should not the fact that Aristotle lived at a time when Greek society, which was based on a slave economy, was being dissolved have something to do with the former, and the fact that he saw no other societal forms before him have something to do with the latter?

The aforementioned difference is the only one worth mentioning that separates us from Lotmar. His further explanations, in particular his applications to the questions that preoccupy us today—the tax question, the question of the political position of women, the question of income distribution—specifically, the way in which he poses these questions, we too can fall in line with. Here, he chases the adherents of privilege into a corner with his astute logic. The appeal to particular deserts, preferences, etc., falls down precisely with the absolute "to each what is due to each [*Jedem was Jedem gebührt*]"; how far inequalities are still to be respected today becomes a question of *expediency*, and Lotmar makes it clear that—a proof that no longer falls within the framework of his treatise—economic inequalities are inexpedient for modern society as soon as the purpose of society is recognised as ensuring the well-being of *all*. Although reducing justice to the principle of comparative equality seems to promise little, it is only down to the given situation that it may contain everything. We certainly find ourselves on solid ground with him, and we know what we do if we appeal to Justice.

Lotmar has appended to his essays a wealth of notes which partly serve as elucidation and partly as criticism of opponents and partial friends. As such, and as source material, they make a valuable contribution. We believe that we can eminently recommend his work to those who wish to clarify to themselves the concepts he discusses.

Notes

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Faust's Tragedy—Study".
2. [Ed. B.—According to §216 of the Reich Criminal Code, even somebody who kills an incurably ill person suffering the most frightful pain at their *explicit* and *earnest* request would be punished with imprisonment for no less than three years. For, as the reasoning for this paragraph says, the fundamental principle that life is an inalienable property does not allow for a mild punishment.]
3. [Ed. B.—*Of the rights born with us. Justice. Two Addresses.* Bern, Schmid, Francke & Co., 1893.] Philipp Lotmar (1850–1922), German jurist and founder of modern labour law, for over 30 years Professor of Roman Law at the University of Bern.
4. [Ed. B.—Knapp, to whose memory Lotmar pays heartfelt thanks in a longer note for the inspiration he drew from his *System of Legal Philosophy* for the essays he presents, was a pupil of Feuerbach, but one who, as Lotmar explains, did not merely shine out the light he had received from that man in his works. His aforenamed primary work, which appeared in 1857, was torn down by the all-powerful Bluntschli and other luminaries of the discipline at the time using every trick in the book, and Knapp indeed also never made it beyond *Privatdozent* [adjunct professor]. Only in more recent decades has he been held in higher and higher regard by both legal theorists and even also by philosophers, and his book is outdated only in its economic sections, but otherwise "vernal and sure of a lasting impact".] Johann Caspar Bluntschli (1808–1881), Swiss-German jurist and National-Liberal politician, in 1873 one of the founders of the Institute of International Law in Ghent. Ludwig Knapp (1821–1858), German legal philosopher and poet.
5. Thomas Müntzer (c. 1489–1525), German radical theologian, opponent of both Martin Luther and the Roman Catholic Church, and revolutionary leader in the 1524–1525 German Peasants' War.
6. Philipp Lotmar, *Vom Rechte, das mit uns geboren ist; Die Gerechtigkeit: Zwei Vorträge* (Bern: Schmid, Francke & Co., 1893), p. 17.
7. Ibid., p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 34.
9. Gnaeus Domitius Annius Ulpianus (c. 170–228), Roman jurist, one of five authorities named by Valentinian III's *Law of Citations* (426), the partial basis of the *Codes* of Theodosian (438) and Justinian (534), most commonly remembered for the statement "*juris praecepta sunt haec: honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere* [The basic principles of law are: to live honourably, not to harm any other person, to render each their own]".

10. [Ed. B.—At the end of the previous century in England, murder and horse theft were equally threatened with death. In cases of the latter, juries usually acquitted the accused even when the act was established beyond doubt. If they did not do that and an execution took place, public opinion was "offended and outraged", i.e., it found it unjust to apply the law [*Recht*]. (Lecky, *History of the Enlightenment in Europe*)]
11. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), English Romantic poet, author of the utopian poem *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem, with Notes* (1813), a large work in nine cantos and seventeen notes, which deal with social-political themes, including the "doctrine of necessity". Shelley, *Queen Mab* (London: W. Clark, 1821 [1813]), pp. 116–23.
12. Lotmar, p. 89.
13. Ibid., p. 74.
14. Ibid., p. 76.
15. Ibid., pp. 17, 40.

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CHAPTER 19

Natural Science *Contra* Social Science

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Another one. In the jumble of anti-socialist writings with which the German book market is blessed, there is already a not insubstantial percentage of pronouncements against socialism by more-or-less notable representatives of natural science, specifically of the specific branch of it that is called biology. But the plaudits that Spencer, Häckel, Schmidt, etc., have earned in their chivalrous battle against the dragon of Social Democracy give these gentlemen's disciples no rest, and no literary season goes by without such and such a number of new contributions to the dossier: natural scientists *contra* Social Democracy.[1]

We can brush past most of these pronouncements and onto the order of the day with a shrug of our shoulders. It is—if Herr Eugen Richter may permit me to borrow his phrase—here too always only "the same anti-social-democratic chatter", vamped up with natural-scientific slogans. And also, however much these natural scientists may pride themselves that their science is the science *par excellence*, then on these occasions they only show that no occupation is without its fair share of expert blinkeredness [*Fachborniertheit*], none saves those who hold it from the fate of that craftsman to whom the famous phrase was first said: Shoemaker, do not judge beyond the shoe [*Schuster, bleib' bei deinem Leisten*].[2] With which realisation we naturally do not wish to stand up for expert simpletonism [*Fachsimpelei*].

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Yet precisely these gentlemen natural scientists should be aware that not only arguments derived from observing certain phenomena in one field of examination but also even *methods* of observation cannot be straightforwardly translated into other areas of research. They should at least let some of that caution, that reticence which they do not perhaps always exercise but still correctly like to *preach* regarding their own domain prevail when they interject in things that lie beyond it. But a not insignificant number of the same people who conduct themselves with the highest ethical strictness when some layperson or other generalises too quickly from a biological discovery are curiously quick off the mark in forgetting the most important caveats and differences when they feel the need to pass judgment on the social movements of the present. Then their bourgeois heart and the concern to preserve their beloved science against the accusation of feeding ammunition to Social Democracy drives them to the most ludicrous sideways leaps.

This also applies to a high degree to the latest publication of this genre, namely the work by H. E. Ziegler, extraordinary professor of zoology at the University of Freiburg in particular: *Natural Science and Social-Democratic Theory: Their Relationship Presented on the Basis of the Works of Darwin and Bebel*.[3] The title already betrays a bizarre disposition on the part of the author. We are certainly the last to undervalue Bebel's significance for Social Democracy. But as extraordinary as Bebel's skills are, and however capable an exponent of fundamental socialist principles he may be, he is still—as far as theory is concerned—primarily a populariser; he has always declined to play himself up as one of its scientific representatives. He is in an eminent sense a man of practice, and his work *Woman and Socialism*, which Herr Ziegler addresses, which besides other splendid attributes also possesses that of being a very rich compilation of the results of socialist theory, is in the first instance a summary plea [*Plädoyer*], in which it is more important to compile a wealth of material for certain theses than to provide theoretical explorations for every point it touches on.[4] It belongs to a different category of writing than the fundamental works of the theorists of any domain of knowledge. What would one say about someone who wanted to write a critique of Darwin's theory, who, instead of taking Darwin's works as a basis, chose to restrict themselves to a widespread popular propaganda work by some Darwinist? Surely the natural scientists, including Herr Ziegler, would be the first to protest against such "entirely inadequate furnishing". But for himself the gentleman in question claims the right to unceremoniously push to one side the

recognised theorists of socialism, and to dispense his office of judge over socialist theory on the basis of a second-hand representation.

Herr Ziegler takes as justification for this artificial selection the wide distribution of Bebel's book, and the fact that Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the book from which according to him "Bebel has primarily taken his theoretical views", could not be an object of serious scientific critique, because firstly Engels was connected with Marx, secondly had taken on all of Morgan's theories "without critique", and thirdly had elaborated these in a "tendentious" and for a "level-headed" reader unrefreshing way.[5] Full respect to the level-headedness of the Freiburg zoologist, but we would have preferred to see a little more logic from him. Because in his view Engels received his light from Marx and Morgan, he examines socialist theory in—Bebel, who according to him had received his from Engels. A strange way of arguing.

Let us continue. Herr Ziegler wants to examine the relationship between social-democratic theory and Darwinism. "*The*" book by Engels does not suit him, and so he is finished with Engels. But Engels wrote rather more books, Herr Ziegler, than "the" book, which you claim—incidentally without a shred of justification—gives the impression as if "more passion than reason dictates its words". One of these books—which is perhaps not "the" book, but just happens to be the most significant scientific work that modern German socialism has brought out besides *Capital*: *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*—in several chapters deals with Darwinism specifically, and with the problems of organic life associated with it. Why do you give this book, which after all you will also find cited in Bebel, such a wide berth? Was it here too only the *aesthetic* revulsion towards the "handwaving" with which according to you Engels pursues the debate that made you shy away from this book with your face averted? Then we regret that we cannot respect a delicate sensibility that makes the scientific value of a work dependent purely on questions of form, and thereby applies a criterion that counts as antiquated today even in the institutes for the daughters of the educated classes.

In fact, anyone who wants to address the relationship between social-democratic theory and natural science and anthropology, and who wishes to go about doing so honestly, cannot do without going back to the writings of the man who, as co-founder of the theory of modern scientific socialism, is not only the most reliable source of information about it alongside Marx, but who even more than Marx preoccupied himself precisely with the study of natural sciences. With Bebel, whose primary

activity is practical education, who only on exceptional occasions can even find time for literary work in general, and in whose work natural-scientific questions are only addressed in passing, it was quite possible (and is also more forgivable) that some turns of phrase, some expressions crept in to which an expert might object, that some arguments from biological research were granted a somewhat greater significance than they possess in the eyes of its representatives. Pretty much any outsider is subject to this. So if Herr Ziegler wanted to correct the occasional lapses that sneaked in with Bebel in this regard, then naturally that should not be taken away from him. But then he should have given his book the appropriate title, and he should not claim to have properly discussed the relationship between social-democratic theory and natural science. If already the overwhelming majority of Bebel's forays into the domain of natural science are absolutely not affected by his critique, then it is entirely irrelevant for the relationship in question where it is truly able to establish in Bebel an erroneous application of a proposition from biological science.

When, e.g., on p. 189 of his book, Bebel conjectures that the different brain formation of the sexes is the result of the different upbringing they received in the past, after on p. 188 he argued that "thousands of years of male rule have brought about the difference in the physical and mental development of the sexes", then that may not conform to the views about the nature of inheritance that prevail today—although, incidentally, it fits with Darwin's earlier assertions about inheritance insofar as Darwin firstly let characteristics that were acquired through use and non-use of organs be inherited, and secondly let such inheritance also apply to secondary sexual characteristics.[6] But the theory of Galton, Weismann, etc., that is accepted by most biologists today, which denies the inheritance of acquired characteristics, is firstly still only a hypothesis on some points after all, and secondly, even if it were thoroughly unchallenged, would only mean that Bebel's argument on this point rested on insufficient awareness of the latest results of embryological research. Socialist theory would not be affected by that in the slightest. For it presumes neither factual equality of all the not-primarily-sexual physical and intellectual characteristics of men and women, nor does it stand or fall with the possibility of achieving this equality. It only demands that women should have the opportunity of deploying their physical and intellectual capacities without respect to the prejudices and the narrow-minded egoism of the ruling male caste—making way for them, but not mechanical equality. On the contrary, it opposes mechanical equality-constructions so much that

where in fact physiological differences obtain that require particular consideration in the interests of individuals themselves as well as of society at large, it seeks to take these into account far more than society does today, which forbids women certain professions that they could take up without damaging their own health and that of their progeny, but condemns them with an easy conscience to work in which they waste away and only bring weakling children into the world.

Social Democracy does not say: equality demands that women become doctors, ditch-diggers, judges, stone carriers, professors, lead workers; it only says: the equality of rights [*Gleichberechtigung*] that we have written on our banner demands that women who have demonstrated the inclination and the required skills for the occupation of doctor, judge, science teacher, be allowed to perform them under the same conditions as men. But it does not justify, e.g., that women are used in certain branches of the lead industry, after experience has shown that the female body has far less capacity to resist lead dust than the male one, and suffers under its effects far more seriously. Social Democracy conceives of the postulate of equality *far less mechanically* than the bourgeois parties and above all the gentlemen bourgeois Darwinists do—we resent having to use the name of the great natural researcher in connection with this—who apply their "struggle for existence" in a formulaic way to everything and everyone, whether they are talking about plants or animals, or about humanity at its earliest or human society at its highest stages of development.

We say bourgeois Darwinists because besides those who cannot or will not see Darwinism except through the lens of worshipping and defending bourgeois competition, there are enough well-known students and successors of Darwin who view the "struggle for existence" with more critical eyes, and see in it neither the sole factor for progress nor the factor that is necessary everywhere for its perfection. Among English people who knew Darwin and whom he himself recognised as followers who understood his theory well, we shall here name only Ray Lankester, professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of London, Dr. Edward B. Aveling, and Herr Grant Allen, who at the same time are Darwinists and more-or-less convinced socialists.[7] Ray Lankester has shown in his work *Degeneration, A Chapter in Darwinism* that the "struggle for existence" may well lead to the preservation of individuals who are best suited to certain conditions of existence, but that it is often the least-developed, degenerate individuals that prove themselves the "best adapted", and in the struggle for existence carry the victory over those

who are better-developed in respect of the size or perfectedness of their organs. A glance into world history also shows how often this was the outcome in the struggles of humanity. Not only that intellectually lower-lying peoples often defeated intellectually higher ones, whereby one could still say that the former—e.g., the Macedonians and Romans versus the Greeks, later the Germans versus the Romans—had for that reason been morally healthier; besides that, the intellectually *and* morally lowest of the conquered, as the individuals best suited to their changed conditions of existence, were the victors in the "struggle for existence" over their betters among their fellow-countrymen, and imparted their corruption to their foreign conquerors. The Greeks who outlasted the Macedonian and Roman Conquest were certainly no better a race than that of the Periclean Age, and those who knew how to adapt themselves to the conditions of Turkish conquest endowed the world with fewer heroes of action and thought than they did virtuosos of commercial speculation and worse, so that the name "*grec*" has gradually acquired a very fatalistic additional meaning. The "survival of the fittest" has evinced in the history of peoples and nations very conflicting results regarding what is "fit".

Famously, even the German Darwinist who is mentioned the most in popular literature, Ernst Häckel, previously made some very dismissive comments about the effects of the wars and militarism of modernity on the further development of humanity, and has ascribed to them an opposite reading than that they lead to its perfection. In later editions of his works, Herr Häckel has significantly limited his damning verdict. Herr Ziegler forbids us from assuming that the Jena professor's political stance and the Reich's rising additional demands for military purposes have anything to do with this change in his scientific judgment. He is outraged that Bebel castigates the ambition among the professional representatives of science, that he speaks about the fact that a great part of the scholars who hold high office are paid to defend the position of the ruling classes, that they are practising bunkum science [*Afterwissenschaft*]. What a way science is treated by social democrats, he cries in outrage on p. 15, identifying science with scholardom [*Gelehrtentum*], "as soon as it teaches something different from what they want to hear". And in an addendum, he repudiates anybody hurling "slanders" of this kind at him as well, and accusing him of not having written his book out of honest conviction. Precisely his best and most understanding friends had said to him that it would be far more advantageous for his career, instead of writing this book, to finish an embryological work that he had started. But in the

interest of a good cause, he had heroically ignored this counsel, as wise as it was.

What a classic example of scientific self-sacrifice!

But you must forgive us, Herr Ziegler, for describing your arguments as flying maliciously in the face of your "science". After all, according to it, accommodating oneself to one's conditions is the first, the highest virtue, since above all it promises victory in the struggle for existence. Whoever adapts best to these conditions has the best prospect of running their competitors off the field of battle, and since it is still for the time being the propertied classes who distribute offices and dignities in the state, the scholar who adapts their science to these conditions not only *in fact* has the best chances of success, they also *deserve* them, because they alone are proceeding according to the precepts of "natural science". Instead of rejecting being described as ambitious as a shameful accusation, you should claim it as the most sought-after praise, and with the entire courage of your convictions—which is indeed phenomenal—thoroughly abominate the ideology that hazards a career and, depending on how things go, life itself on a doctrine that is inconvenient for those in power as degeneracy, unreason, and an idiosyncrasy unworthy of survival. That would at least be logical. But to preach the science of ambition for the length of an entire book, and then still reject with outrage the description as ambitious—that is a tragic half-measure. Fortunately, Herr Ziegler, you have in your instinct a better guide than in your reasoning or your good friends, who seem somewhat suspicious to us. The reception of your book in the good bourgeois press will surely have convinced you of that.

Herr Ziegler finds that the social-democratic theory of the abolition of wars by socialism is "thoroughly not in accordance with natural science". Proof: Darwin has at various points of his work argued that the wars between savages and later between people worked in favour of the natural selection of tribe versus tribe and people versus people. Even if we admit this, this does not yet prove anything for the wars of modernity, which take place in quite changed forms. Apart from that, it is not even possible to deny that now wars become ever less frequent, since not only Bebel and Social Democracy but also very many other people "completely disregard", to Herr Ziegler's great sorrow, the fact that "a people, if it is victorious, in fact takes great advantage from this, which has an impact on the economic life of all classes".[8] In addition to this, Herr Ziegler also points in a footnote to the economic boom and prosperity that a favourable war has as a result, as well as to the increase of marriages in Prussia after

1870/71 and the increased labour opportunities and the higher wages that followed these blessed war years. Very "natural-scientific". Marriages, as is well-known, declined very rapidly again already from the mid-1870s, and precisely 3 years after the conclusion of peace, the magnificence of the "economic boom" gave way to the commercial crisis that lasted until 1879/80, whereas defeated France remained almost entirely spared the economic crash of the 1870s.[9] Even from the standpoint of "commerce" victory today is almost more destructive for peoples than the war itself, which even the prospect of new billions will not make popular, especially as there should have been no difficulties in "bleeding out" the French, as declared by the heroic Herr Häckel. But Herr Ziegler is not at a loss for consolation. If we cannot merrily have a new war every 5 years, which would be so very desirable for the improvement of the race, then we still have a certain replacement for it in continued armaments, since "the—primordially beneficial—struggle for existence manifests not just in the wars between peoples, but already in the competitive preparation of wars, in so-called 'armed Peace'".[10] So in the eyes of "modern natural science" all present and future demands of militarism are brilliantly justified in advance. Not Herr Ziegler himself, but the "science" that rests "on the basis of empirics" is National-Liberal.

Incidentally this empirical "science" manages to write: "The disputes between peoples can therefore never (!) be settled by a Court of Arbitration, because every judge's verdict only becomes effective through there being a force to execute it".[11] Now firstly in more recent times, disputes between several countries have repeatedly been settled by the route of arbitration, and secondly there is ultimately despite all xenophobia [*Völkerverhetzung*] and diplomatic intrigues such a thing as public opinion, from whose influence under certain circumstances even an autocratic Tsar cannot shield themselves. Without illusions about the possibility of completely securing peace between peoples under today's social and political conditions, one can still say that experience has *proven* that this goal does not hang in the air, but rather moves ever closer to realisation with the rising development of recognition and intercourse between peoples. After all, the government of the British Empire has initiated agreements with the gigantic Republic of the United States according to which in future all disputes between them will be submitted to a court of arbitration. Herr Ziegler opines: "Anyone who takes their stand on the basis of empirics can offer no sympathy to this idea (of international unification and of eternal peace between peoples)". If that is so, one will do well not to derive the word empirics from the

Greek and translate it as the science of experience anymore, but to trace it back to the word Empire. *L'Empire c'est la guerre.* The Reich of these gentlemen may not exist without war.

In chapter after chapter of Herr Ziegler's book, we come across assertions that, like those outlined above, fly directly in the face of facts. The struggle for existence, a theory derived from certain natural and societal phenomena, is turned into a fetish, which reality will readily betray as soon as, or wherever, the formula does not fit it—a scientific Procrustean bed of the worst kind. Herr Ziegler becomes truly grotesque when he attempts to disprove Morgan's prehistorical examinations. As a level-headed man who moves in "good bourgeois circles", he is naturally far from using harsh words—perish the thought that anyone would allow themselves to be swept into doing such a thing. But when he calls Morgan an "imaginative American", who lets himself be guided by "preconceived ideas", in that he—Morgan—"*wanted* to make the conditions of the Iroquois whom he had studied the central point of the trajectory of development", then in all love and kindness he said pretty much all that was necessary to discredit Morgan *a priori*.[12] The remaining work is then done by citations torn out of their context and reproduced incompletely—i.e., citations in which bits are left out without the reader being made aware of this (compare, e.g., the citation from Morgan on p. 67, note), and very inexact references that skew the representation of his line of thought. We want to leave the question of intention unexamined, especially since negligence should not be judged a hair's-breadth more mildly here, but whether intentionally or through negligence, Herr Ziegler's book is a veritable collection of such *falsifications*—whether about Morgan, about Bebel himself, or about Engels, whom Herr Ziegler seeks to despatch with a few strokes by-the-bye when he is writing off Morgan.

So, for instance, already the proposition from Bebel's work that Herr Ziegler presents as "social-democratic doctrine", that in humanity's early days, "women were equal to men in bodily size and bodily strength, in respect to thought and feeling, overall in respect to their entire characters", is an arrant distortion of Bebel's arguments. Nowhere does Bebel claim such equality, he only expresses what even the bourgeois "natural researcher" cannot deny, that among almost all savage tribes the differences between the sexes in respect to the named characteristics are smaller than at later stages of development. Herr Ziegler says that Morgan had also, *inter alia*, claimed that matriarchal institutions had also existed among the Greeks and Romans, "even though, aside from fabulous myths,

not a single conclusive piece of evidence can be provided for that".[13] Now Morgan could really have been forgiven if in light of the wealth and conclusive force of the material set down in the myths of the Ancients he had satisfied himself with that, but in fact he did not let matters rest there, but provides facts from historical times—bans on marriages between children of the same mother, permission for marriages between children of the same father—which can only be explained as remnants of the matriarchal epoch that lives on in the legends. Herr Ziegler's claim is *untrue*. From Engels' *The Origin of the Family*, Herr Ziegler argues that according to Engels "love and jealousy in the human race only emerged in more recent times", citing as proof the statement: "No such thing as individual sex love existed before the Middle Ages", and haughtily comments about this: "A sentence that from the standpoint of history as well as from the standpoint of ethnography seems just as wrong as from the standpoint of natural science".[14] Anyone who reads that must naturally think that Engels is either an ignoramus, who does not even know as much ethnology [*Völkerkunde*] or history as some Karlchen Miesnik, or afflicted with total blindness on questions of sexual life.[15] But in fact, the cited sentence in Engels does not relate to the emergence of love and jealousy *simpliciter* at all, but rather refers to a quite specific historical form of love, which Engels—in contrast to the *eros* of the Ancients, etc., and because it relies on *reciprocity* and on a previously-unknown *intensity* of loving relationship—describes precisely with the particular expression "individual sex love". We do not even have to say what kind of name this sort of citation deserves.

The arguments that Herr Ziegler brings to the table versus Engels and Bebel, so far as they are not supposed to disprove things that he falsely insinuates about these men, are of similar quality to his style of citation. The lawless sexual intercourse in the horde, which Morgan and Engels assume as a precursor of the family bound by blood-ties, he regards like E. Westermarck through the prism of the brothel, as Engels fittingly says regarding this man, as "general prostitution", and gathers together all manner of zoological examples to prove the unlikelihood of such degeneracy among the ancestors of humanity.[16] But in the fourth edition of *Origin*, which Herr Ziegler had in front of him, Engels already emphasised that lawless sexual intercourse only means the absence of the limits imposed later by ethics, which in no sense always means motley promiscuity in practice, and in particular does not rule out lasting monogamy. Besides Westermarck, a certain Starcke, who wrote a book about the "primitive family", is Herr Ziegler's second for the fact that Morgan's

entire theory about prehistoric society is not regarded as scientifically well-founded by more recent ethnographers.[17] This Starcke, who cannot express himself strongly enough about Morgan's "sick delusions" and "muddled psychology", is best characterised by the following sentence, which Ziegler takes from him to use against Morgan:

> In the Agnation (the patriarchal kinship line), we find a fact that is parallel to the female line, and nobody will ever think to explain this through the unrelatedness of the mother.

Truly, no one can compete with such strong arguments. With the same acuteness of logic, Herr Ziegler concludes that if Morgan surmised from the relationship terminology of the Malayans that relevant relationship conditions existed among them, one could just as rightly also claim that the nuns of a cloister who call themselves sisters stem from a great collective marriage, and that a son-in-law who calls his father-in-law father had proceeded from a collective marriage between (!!) his actual father and his father-in-law.[18] Any commentary on this would only dilute its effect.

To give yet another example for the way in which Herr Ziegler judges practical questions, it should be mentioned that Bebel's remark that private cooking will eventually be replaced by collective eating [*Speisegenossenschaft*] with great steam-kitchens and machines, prompted him to add in what was meant to be an ironic way that we have an example for this "in the eating-canteens of barracks, prisons, and orphanages". Your catalogue has several gaps, Herr Ziegler. You have forgotten the public soup kitchens [*Volksküchen*], to which hundreds of thousands of people already flock today, and the great cookshops [*Garküchen*], the restaurants, the clubs and hotels, in which the bourgeoisie like to tuck into their meals. To Bebel's comment that the development of social life has the aim of letting women step out of the narrow circle of domesticity and fully participate in public life and the civilised tasks of humanity, Herr Ziegler only has an answer that shows all the breadth of horizon of a small-town philistine: "In these plans, which are targeted against family life, perhaps emancipated old spinsters will find something to like, but popular they are certainly not".[19]

But enough now with individual points, let us finally return to the starting-point of our discussions. We have entitled our article "Natural Science *Contra* Social Science". Naturally, Herr Ziegler will object to this and say that he did not think to impugn social science at all, just as he did

not even attack Social Democracy as a party, but rather only showed that social-democratic theory, which is completely different from the party, falsely appeals to natural science, and that rather "deep principled differences" in fact exist between it and the latter.[20] However, these are empty fancies. As neutral as the word "social science" may be, which is why we also as a rule avoid it as far as possible, then still the concept is quite specific: the science of social development, the science of *human* society. And just as the human being, however much they remain a creation of nature even at the highest stage of development, is still substantially different from all other living creatures, so too social science is different from natural science. It is already thus in principle a misrecognition of this difference and thereby hubristic pretension if one, as Herr Ziegler does in chapter after chapter, opposes "natural-scientific doctrine" to social-democratic theory. The questions of the development of the family, of property and the state in humanity, the population question, competition, the question of war, etc., are connected to particular questions of natural science, but they are not themselves questions of natural science as such. There is, for instance, no natural-scientific doctrine about population growth. For what is left over if one abstracts away from all the particularities of the various forms of societal life and all present and future possibilities for increasing production—like the mathematical calculation that at a certain rate of population increase, even a low one, the time must come where the Earth is so densely populated by humans that there is no room for a single further individual—is a lot of hot air. The question of the law of population for certain societal forms under certain production methods, by contrast, is not answered by natural science, which only offers certain materials for doing so, but social science, in particular social economy [*Sozialökonomie*]. So if Herr Ziegler on p. 116 has "natural science" say "that Malthus' law of population is correct and appropriate", and at the end of his book sings the praises of the *empirical* character of natural science to the detriment of "all theoretical speculation that goes too far", then he shoots himself in the foot, for "Malthus' law" is nothing more than entirely abstract speculation.

Likewise in the question already touched on of the equal status of men and women. We do not want to go any further into Weismann's theories regarding the laws of inheritance here, but the way in which Herr Ziegler and others exploit these theories and Darwinism in general to justify the allegedly natural intellectual inferiority of women provokes our disagreement.[21] In the first instance, against this assumption speaks the fact that

the female individual is not just the child of the mother, but also that of the father, and often enough resembles the latter in appearance and in very many intellectual properties, so that it is difficult to believe in a "natural inferiority" of her intellectual capacity so long as it has not been proven that there is a general incompleteness of the female brain compared to that of the man, which is not the case up to now. The question of whether and how far certain functions of the female body do not let lasting and intensive intellectual effort seem desirable for women is secondary here, for it is not about the ought, but rather about the possibility of its exercise. It should also not be forgotten that the sexual functions do not have an equally strong effect on the nerves at all stages of civilisation, with all individuals, and with all forms of way of life.

Just as people earlier were inclined to exaggerate the influence of education, living conditions, etc., so today there is a predominant tendency to exaggerate the characteristic properties people are born with—not just in judging the two sexes, but also in judging different human races. But there is no shortage of facts which, in the face of the all too quick conclusions of certain natural researchers—of "natural science", Herr Ziegler would say here—from the theories of inheritance, would rather counsel very much to caution. What have we not had to hear about the inferiority of negroes in America, about their unsuitability for intellectual occupations, their low moral strength, etc. And how does all of that sit with the fact that today over a million negro children in the United States go to elementary schools, over 12,000 to secondary schools, over 8000 to gymnasia and universities, that at 47 high schools, 25 gymnasia, 25 theological, 5 medical, 5 juristic, and 52 higher teacher seminars negroes who have sat the required exams teach exclusively, that thousands of negroes hold scientific professions, that after 30 years of freedom negroes in the United States, who were once described as children who cannot save, have an estimated asset wealth of 250 million dollars—in short, that within their ranks all the properties are to be found that, whether good or bad, previously counted as distinguishing features of the white race?

In ethnographic books, we have had to read about negroes who despite receiving a higher education returned to Africa as soon as they could, and preferred the life in the bush to the civilised life they were offered. One cannot see anything of the sort in America. And still, since they do not lack the means to do so, according to the theory every year thousands upon thousands of negroes should be returning to Africa. Instead, the negro population of the United States rose by around 3 million between 1860

and 1890—from 4,442,000 to 7,470,000. The influence of the habits they have acquired is stronger than those inherited from their ancestors.

We know that further factors have an effect here, and we do not want to make the mistake of casting too hasty a judgment. All the same, we claim the right of scepticism if "natural science" all-too-enthusiastically pushes the adage of nothing-but-inheritance. It seems to us that this newly modish cult of the ancestor is to a not insignificant part a reflection of the reactionary tendencies among the citizenry of our days. If negro emancipation was not already a completed fact, then we would surely have Darwinism or Weissmanism served up against it today, as were previously certain parts of the Bible. We totally respect the research of these learned men about the questions of inheritance. But where the fructification of their research is concerned, then Social Democracy has every reason on this point too to keep a close watch on the "natural science" that opposes it. After all, it has already managed to "natural-scientifically" justify not just inherited monarchy but also the worship of Bismarck and his protégé Herbert.[22]

Notes

1. Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), German philosopher, zoologist, and marine biologist, populariser of Darwinism within Germany and advocate of eugenicism and scientific racism. Eduard Oscar Schmidt (1823–1886), German zoologist, friend of Haeckel and one of the earliest defenders of Dawinian evolutionary theory. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), English social Darwinist philosopher, biologist, sociologist, and classical liberal political theorist, coiner of the term "survival of the fittest" and one of the most prominent public intellectuals of the late nineteenth century.
2. Originally *ne supra crepidam sutor judicaret*. Gaius Plinius Secundus, *Naturalis Historia* XXXV.85.
3. [Ed. B.—Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke, 1894. vi and 252 p. 80.] Heinrich Ernst Ziegler (1858–1925), German zoologist, animal psychologist, and historian of development, social Darwinist and collaborator of Haeckel, national-liberal opponent of socialism.
4. August Bebel (1840–1913), German socialist politician and writer, founder alongside Wilhelm Liebknecht of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP) in 1869, which in 1875 merged with Ferdinand Lassalle's General German Workers' Association (ADAV) to form the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD), forerunner of the SPD. Bebel,

Woman and Socialism, Meta L. Stern (tr.) (New York, NY: Socialist Literature Co., 1910 [1879]).

5. Heinrich Ernst Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die socialdemokratische Theorie: Ihr Verhältnis dargelegt auf Grund der Werke von Darwin und Bebel; Zugleich ein Beitrag zur wissenschaftlichen Kritik der Theorien der derzeitigen Socialdemokratie* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1894), p. 6. Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), American anthropologist, social theorist, Republican state politician, and lawyer, proponent of matrilineal clanship as an older human institution than the patriarchal family, whose work on social structure and technological influence on progress influenced Marx and Engels.
6. [Ed. B.—We are citing from the tenth edition.] Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, p. 252.
7. [Ed. B.—Grant Allen's lecture, which was printed in this journal (part 1, 1890/91), and which leads Darwinism into battle *on the side of* socialism, Herr Ziegler skates over with the remark that it, as well as an article on this question by Kautsky in the *Österreichischer Arbeiterkalender*, were not available to him, and also seemed of limited interest to him based on what he had read about them.] Grant Allen (1848–1899), Canadian science writer and socialist advocate of Darwinian evolutionary theory. Edward Bibbins Aveling (1849–1898), English biology writer and socialist, prominent defender of Darwinian theory, founding member of the Socialist League and Independent Labour Party, partner of Eleanor Marx. Ray Lankester (1847–1929), British zoologist and evolutionary biologist, follower of Thomas Huxley and the Rationalist group, and friend of Marx later in life.
8. Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die socialdemokratische Theorie*, p. 166.
9. [Ed. B.—In the German Reich, per 100,000 of population, there were the following marriage figures: 1872 1028, 1875 910, 1878 771, and 1881 746. Only from this year onwards, which curiously was not a war year, does an increase set in again.]
10. Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die socialdemokratische Theorie*, p. 169.
11. Ibid., p. 169.
12. Ibid., pp. 46–7.
13. Ibid., p. 47.
14. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State: In the Light of the Researches by Lewis H. Morgan*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 26: Engels 1882–1889* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p. 183; Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die socialdemokratische Theorie*, pp. 113–14.

15. The expression "Karlchen Miesnick", supposedly Yiddish in origin, was used to refer to someone with unworldly, naïve, or downright simpletonish views.
16. Edvard Alexander Westermarck (1862–1939), Finnish philosopher, Darwinist sociologist, and sociobiologist, expert in the history of marriage customs and sexual taboos.
17. Carl Nikolai Starcke (1858–1926), Danish sociologist, philosopher, social-liberal politician, and expert in the evolution of the family.
18. Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die socialdemokratische Theorie*, p. 59.
19. Ibid., p. 97.
20. Ibid., p. 239.
21. [Ed. B.—An article about these theories has been proposed to us.]
22. [Ed. B.—This happens in the book, which Herr Ziegler also cites, by Herr *Ammon*, *Darwinism Against Social Democracy* (Hamburg, Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei AG). We overlooked the discussion of this book at the time, so it should be added retrospectively that although it was written in a less pedantic and pretentious way, and is also far more entertaining to read than Ziegler's book, it also at the same time reveals far more clearly its reactionary drawbacks, twists facts even more shamelessly, and draws far brasher conclusions than this one. Herr Ammon also proves, *inter alia*, the utility of the Anti-Socialist Law "Darwininistically". What will Herr Herbert Spencer say to this?] Nikolaus Heinrich Ferdinand Herbert von Bismarck (1849–1904), German politician and diplomat, son of Otto von Bismarck.

CHAPTER 20

Morality and Politics

On the History of Political Wrongdoing

Neue Zeit 14/1(13) (December 1895), pp. 389–94.

Is there such a thing as political morality? Does the morality of individuals have a natural relationship to politics, i.e., a relationship that is given in itself? This question has often been raised, and the answers it has received have been very diverse. In countless shades, two fundamentally opposed conceptions contend with one another, one that denies this connection, and another that asserts it or raises it to the level of a demand. The extreme version of the first is the theory commonly described as Machiavellianism, whereby in politics the choice of means is always to be subordinated to the end, and that means is the best which makes possible the fastest and surest implementation of a given end. The extreme version of the other is the condemnation of every political measure that does not conform precisely to the moral demands placed on individual members of the community in their interactions with each other. The contradiction disappears the more moral prescriptions are abandoned, for private life as well as for general application, just as radical individualism, however democratically or liberally [*freiheitlich*] it might conduct itself, in practice famously reaches the very same conclusions as despotic absolutism.

It is not the task of this article to go into the fundamental questions of morality, and make observations about whether in fact the whole of morality is not an illusion, or, as one researcher expressed it some time ago on this subject, that "strictly speaking there are as many moral codes as there

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are and have been zones, nations, tribes, castes, classes, civilised conditions, *individuals*, and *days*", i.e., infinitely many, which here is tantamount to none.[1] Illusion or not, so long as there are human societies, there are moral concepts—conceptions of right and wrong, of duties and misdemeanours. The content of these concepts changes with the nature of these societies: new virtues and new vices take shape, what was moral today becomes immoral tomorrow and *vice versa*, but at any given time every society has a code of moral conceptions, which is no less real because it lies beyond immediate sensuous perception. In complex societies there is also a class morality, which evinces contradictions that are all the stronger, the more acutely these classes are divided by conditions of rule, particular rights, economic positions, and social life. But even these contradictions are only relative in nature. Alongside them, there is general cultural development, which no class can quite remove itself from, and which determines the way in which at a given level of this development the struggles between the various classes are waged. This should be stressed all the more, because a conception of class struggle that ignores this point can easily become very fateful for those who are engaged in it.

However with that we have already reached our actual topic, for class struggles are political struggles. Is there a separate morality for these?

We have before us a book that substantially concerns itself with this question. It is entitled *Political Crime*, and carries as its epigraph the well-known saying by Virgil: Be warned; learn ye to be just and not to slight the gods [*discite justitiam moniti et non temnere divos*].[2]

The standpoint of the author is already virtually revealed by this motto. Herr Louis Proal wants to help the same moral fundamental principles achieve dominance in politics as those that prevail—or should prevail—in citizens' interactions with one another. And the way of achieving this, for him, is a return to Christian faith, to "spiritualism". Materialism is the father of political wrongdoing in the present: corruption, political bigotry, racial and class hatred, lust for political depredation, and every other bad thing that exists in political life. The proof: various anarchist bombers have developed in essays and in speeches before the court a materialism driven to the furthest extremes.

It would be pointless at this point to explain to Herr Proal the difference between scientific and practical materialism. As a theoretical effort, his book is beneath all critique. Herr Proal is certainly not so limited as to seek political wrongdoing only among the ruled, among those who rebel against the prevailing authorities. He traces it through all times and in all

political *strata*: in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times, in monarchical and in republican governments, among conquerors and diplomats as well as among demagogues and pamphleteers. His book is a true arsenal of materials to analyse political wrongdoing, but this analysis itself is not carried out anywhere—in fact, he does not even attempt to carry out a scientific treatment of his object. Apart from the examples that he presents to us, which often show the want of a critical hand, Herr Proal only offers us moral reflections and appeals.[3] Now, these may be as well-intended as they like; in the best case, they express pious wishes, which are hardly persuasive by themselves. We are essentially reliant on the lessons that the facts he presents themselves proclaim.

Only on one point does Herr Proal attempt a kind of logical argument. *Raison d'état* is, in his eyes, the mother of political wrongdoing, since it rests on the fundamental principle of dualistic morality, according to which what is right for the private person is not fair for the statesman, or as Mirabeau expressed it, "petty morality is the death of great morality".[4] In fact, inspected more closely, all actions that can be described as political wrongdoing in the broadest sense—insurrections against oppressive laws belong to a different rubric—insofar as they derive from political motives at all, can be traced back to the same line of argument that allows statesmen to use means for their ends that would make the private person infamous. Herr Proal as a representative of "petty" morality, i.e., the morality of the private person, also wants this to apply to statesmen and politicians, and replace moral dualism through one single morality for all. That is a laudable endeavour; in that, we are thoroughly on his side. But we regret that we have to say that what he provides as reasons in favour of this would not yet persuade us of its necessity.

Put briefly, his argument is that *raison d'état* is not just contrary to morality but also counterproductive, and only appears to have success in its favour; and that often putting the fundamental principles of simple morality and right last in politics has led to serious downsides, which would have been avoided by observing them. We do not deny this, but so far as Herr Proal proves this, he only shows that *raison d'état* may not be applied indiscriminately and senselessly, and does not simply justify every injuring of common morality. He writes:

> The great political mistakes of Louis XIV and Napoleon I were also moral transgressions. By suspending the edict of Nantes, Louis XIV thought he was strengthening the state, but in fact he was weakening it. When, on

> receiving the news of the arrest of the Duc d'Enghien, the wife of the first consul entreated her husband in tears not to spill his blood, Bonaparte answered her: "You are a woman, you understand nothing of my politics, you need to stay quiet." He believed that he would derive great advantages from this unjust act. This injury of the law of peoples rallied all the honest people in France and the rest of Europe against him; it cost him the alliance with Prussia, which he needed at that time, and favoured the aims of England. … The heart of a woman had judged more correctly than the genius of the great politician.

The Duc d'Enghien was shot on 21 March 1804. The honest people cried, but that was that. Only once Bonaparte in his hubris placed the Imperial crown on his head and had himself crowned King of Italy in 1805 did Pitt bring about the Third Coalition against France; but the country that cautiously held back from all of this was—Prussia. It watched patiently as Napoleon dashed Austria to the ground, it merrily let him use it to occupy Hanover and thereby provoke England into becoming its enemy, and Napoleon first had to worry it with a whole series of specially-chosen humiliations before he made it go to war against him and be thoroughly beaten and destroyed. The shooting of the Duc d'Enghien was a stroke of violence that was just as hubristic as it was an unnecessary; but quite different strokes of violence and political infractions of far greater impact had to be added to it to lead to Napoleon's fall. Wrongdoings of a far worse kind have been left unatoned-for in history.

From the standpoint of common morality, there has hardly been a ruler who made use of means in politics as reprehensible as Friedrich II of Prussia. He broke treaties when it suited him, and betrayed German interests with the greatest readiness if by doing so he could strengthen the power of his Hohenzollern house. (One should think about how in 1744 he attacked Austria without any provocation at the moment where it was about to take Alsace off France, which at that time was still thoroughly German.) He ultimately took this a bit too far and thereby brought himself into a very sticky situation for a while, but in the end his breach of trust proved very profitable for him and his dynasty. Historical irony willed it to that precisely this cynic on the throne penned an Anti-Machiavelli in his youth, an edifying homily, as Macaulay says, "against rapacity, perfidy, arbitrary government, unjust wars—in short, against almost everything for which its author is now remembered among men".[5] His acts were

Machiavellian, and they could be so because they were carried out under conditions that substantially matched those Machiavelli had in mind.

Herr Proal begins his book appropriately with a chapter on Machiavellianism, whereby he is naturally not so ahistorical as to trace it back to Machiavelli. Rather, he rattles off a whole series of examples to prove that the Ancients fundamentally knew and practised this kind of statecraft. Political wrongdoing, or shall we better say the policy of wrongdoing [*Verbrecherpolitik*], is as old as politics itself. It is a chapter that is as interesting as at first glance it is depressing. There is hardly any form of political corruption which the Ancients have not already developed. Not to mention the Romans, we find a very advanced erosion of political ethics in Ancient Athens, and not even just at the time of its decay, but rather at its highest flowering, indeed even at its rise towards it. That the same age which we know as that of Greece's highest art, the age of Pericles, already presented a very extensively-developed rotting of ethics is widely known, and one can hardly describe it as a paradoxical statement that where the stock of the free arts are very high, those of ethical strictness tend to lie fairly low. But already one and a half centuries *before* Pericles, at the time of Solon, political life in Athens was fairly unclean; political deceit flourished then already, as the life history of the famous lawgiver shows.[6] But the further we proceed in the history of Athens, the more insalubrious its public life appears. Bribery, treachery, lying gained the upper hand more and more, until ultimately the entire people appears to us to be a pile of miserable rhetoricians [*Phraseure*], who still proclaim their greatness when they and their state have already sunk to complete political impotence.

Moral dualism was not denied by the Ancients at all. That one might be allowed to use means in political struggle that should be condemned in ordinary life is admitted by them in countless places. "For if we must do wrong, to do so for tyranny", Eteocles says in the *Phoenician Women* by Euripides, "is the fairest cause, but in all else piety should be our aim."[7] But this dualism is hardly original proof of moral depravity. We will have to look for its source in the conception of the primordial community, according to which the foreigner was, as a rule, an enemy. It must have been inconceivable to the member of the communistic horde that they should observe the same measures of behaviour towards the foreigner as towards the fellow-member of their tribe. The more the struggles between neighbouring tribes increased, the more strongly this conception must have developed, until ultimately every means was right vis-à-vis those who

were not fellow-members of the tribe. The greatest selflessness where the well-being of one's own tribe was at stake could go hand-in-hand with the greatest cruelty and treachery towards outsiders.[8] There is no history that in its beginnings does not provide examples of this kind. The Bible celebrates them, and if "Free-Minded" German antisemites see in that evidence for the original evil of the Jews, then one may do well to remind them of their national monument in the Teutoburg Forest, which certainly is no monument to moral rectitude.[9]

From this dualism of primordial morality one may well be able to derive the political moral dualism of later times, which is perhaps still capable of being aligned with a certain greatness of character, but which already represents an infringement of moral law which now lays claim to a more general validity. In the early days of states, political parties still coincide thoroughly with classes, and the classes oppose one another with similar sentiments as tribes did previously, even where class differences do not themselves coincide with tribal differences, though that may have been the case often enough. What counts as right as far as the external enemy goes is essentially seen as permitted towards those within as well—in any case, it is seen through a different lens than actions against fellow-members of one's own class, and this conception still continues to exist for a long time in the form of tradition even after the state community has already formulated a common morality for all fellow-citizens. Herr Proal sees *raison d'état* only as an evil, he knows it only in its relatively modern form, where it stands in contradiction to the moral laws of private intercourse. But with this ahistorical way of seeing things, he deprives himself of any possibility of seeing in history anything other than a desolate chaos of perfidy, which only changes its forms without becoming any more pleasant. He does not notice at all that despite his philippics against anarchism, his entire treatment of the topic amounts to a panacea. He himself certainly preaches religion and authority as cures, but the anarchist will rightly answer him that in the Middle Ages religion and authority prevailed—more strongly than one could ever hope to reconstruct them now—without for that reason dual morality having ceased to exist. And without joining in the vulgar outcry against the Jesuits, one should still be able to recall that this order, which has as its goal the reconstruction of Papal authority, cultivates this dual morality as a means in a way that has led to the expression "Jesuitic" becoming the popular byword for this kind of morality.

Religion—indeed, any ethics of any kind whatsoever—is impotent to remove dual morality from the world, so long as the material foundations

for it are still present. With that we are not trying to voice any recommendation of such dual morality, and we also do not thereby deny the relative value of ethical concepts. If the idea of suppressing dual morality in politics through moral preaching is utopian today, then this is because, in light of the present conditions of rule and exploitation, contradictions of class and nationality continue to exist, which make periodic recourse to moral dualism a requirement of self-preservation. However, in the meantime, under the influence of modern conditions of intercourse, trade relations, etc., the scope for this dual morality has been significantly narrowed. Diplomacy in the nineteenth century is not permitted to do what it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and likewise *raison d'état* has had its wings clipped in domestic politics. Insofar, we may confidently say that in politics the morality that Mirabeau called petty also has its role to play. It is certainly not in the interests of Social Democracy to diminish or overlook the significance of this civilising advance. We deprive our criticism of those in power of its force if we regard them exclusively as the upholders of class interests, etc., and abstract away from any other obligation. First, the human personality had to be recognised as free before one could seriously think of wanting to emancipate the human being as the bearer of labour-power, and without a high estimation of human personality and its right to life, the idea of real social hygiene could not take root. So there is still a number of rights and moral conceptions whose maintenance as a common good is not only our temporary interest as a party, but which, beyond that, respect for our great goal demands. Every measure that leads to a lowering in the ethical standard of society means delaying the point in time where today's society can be replaced by a higher one. This is also one of the reasons why we prefer the humane forms of political struggle to the brutal ones. These are only seemingly more radical.

Not the hope for a better afterlife [*Jenseits*], but the insight into the conditions of a better life in this world [*Diesseits*] will lead to politics being subordinated to morality.

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—Adolf Gerecke in *The Futility of Moralism* (Zurich 1892, Verlagsmagazin). A book that addresses the problem of morality almost exclusively on the basis of natural-scientific materialism, and as a result of this limitation necessarily misses its mark. For Gerecke, morality turns almost solely on questions of satisfying metabolic needs (eating and drinking, sexual

enjoyment), whereas these in reality only become questions of morality where they affect the relationship between the individual and their fellow human beings, i.e., in their relation to social life. Yet precisely where what matters is to examine these relations—the effect of social considerations or motives on animalistic drives—Gerecke releases the readers with a few rhetorical commonplaces, and he does not even go into questions such as truth and lying, justice and violation, etc. He should better have given his book the title *The Futility of Asceticism*, since at most this is what he proves.]

2. [Ed. B.—*Political Crime*, by Louis Proal, counsellor to the Court of Appeal at Aix, laureate of the Institut Français. Paris 1895, Felix Alcan, 307 p. 80 (Library of Contemporary Philosophy), 5 francs.] Virgil, *Aeneid*, Henry Rushton Fairclough (tr.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), Book VI, l. 620. Louis Proal (1843–1900), French jurist and expert on criminal law.
3. [Ed. B.—So for Herr Proal, Cicero is an absolute authority where his various enemies are concerned, even though he himself provides a very drastic example of Cicero's mendacity.]
4. Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791), French aristocrat and moderate revolutionary leader during the French Revolution, advocate of constitutional monarchy, and significant contributor to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*.
5. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *An Essay on Frederic the Great* (New York, NY: Maynard, Merrill, & Co., 1893), p. 24.
6. [Ed. B.—Solon was suspected, before the promulgation of the *seisachtheia*, the great waiving of debts, of having accrued masses of money through his friends and with it bought up estates, so that through the debt-waiving he and his friends became rich. Speculative manoeuvres of that kind seem indeed to have been carried out by some people at the time who knew of Solon's intention; but it is thoroughly unlikely that Solon himself had anything to do with them. One way or another, this story betrays an entirely respectable corruption of public life. One understood then already how to profit commercially from social reforms.]
7. Euripides, *Phoenissae*, E. P. Coleridge (tr.), in Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill (eds.), *The Complete Greek Drama* (New York, NY: Random House, 1938), ll. 523–7.
8. [Ed. B.—Just as in the previous century English statesmen corrupted Parliament through bribes, but themselves kept their hands clean.]
9. The Hermann Monument [*Hermannsdenkmal*] near Detmold, Germany, constructed 1838–1875, commemorates the victory of the Cherusci chieftain Arminius over Roman forces at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (c. 9 CE) during the Roman–Germanic Wars.

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CHAPTER 21

Proudhon as a Politician and Publicist

Neue Zeit 14/2(46) (August 1896), pp. 609–21.

In this journal, we have hitherto only had the opportunity to confront Proudhon polemically, and to emphasise the mistakes in his dialectic and the perversities of his theories. This was necessary because we had to deal with immeasurably exaggerated glamorisations of his efforts, and with attempts to tout his social-political doctrines to the German audience as universally miraculous means. Even if we now have nothing to take back of what we wrote in repudiating these efforts, we are still far from claiming that what we said about Proudhon on these occasions afforded a complete picture of the man, and sufficed for a conclusive verdict about his literary and political activity. And likewise what there is available on Proudhon in the printed literature of German Social Democracy. Even the masterful sketch of Proudhon that Marx provided in the old Berlin *Sozialdemokrat*, which is incorporated into the German edition of the *Poverty of Philosophy*, even that, as much as it hits its mark in its general tenor, is all the same only a *sketch*—a pen-portrait dashed out by an unerring hand, which lets the intellectual physiognomy of the man emerge in the clearest way with a few strokes but neither can nor will count as a full portrait. Incidentally, at this opportunity we should mention something that is often forgotten. Namely that, when that sketch was written, various writings by Proudhon that had a certain effect on the general public, such as, *inter alia*, the *Political Capacity of the Working Classes*—had not yet been published at all.

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Even if these posthumous publications would not have changed anything substantial about the general characterisation of Proudhon as a social philosopher painted in Marx's sketch, then they are still, like other writings by Proudhon that Marx did not touch on, at all costs to be enlisted in creating a complete intellectual picture of the man. With all his small and great mistakes, however, Proudhon is such an important phenomenon in the history of socialism that it is well worth the effort of getting to know him better. His self-congratulatory playing with words and concepts, his eternal obsession with baffling the reader through his paradoxical statements, the hubris of the autodidact shining through at every opportunity in his writings, aggravate, even embitter their reader to the point of most extreme reluctance. But behind all this tasteless twaddle there still lurks a solid fount of knowledge and honest will, a keen gift for drawing distinctions and a creative reasoning vim, and many who today boast of the theoretical clarity with which they have become accustomed to repeating the words "class struggle" and "proletarian socialism" still have quite a lot to learn from "petty-bourgeois Proudhon". Stirrer-upper [*Aufwühler*] and upender [*Umwühler*]—*remueur*—of ideas one of his countrymen called him, and Proudhon has a claim to this title for good as well as ill.

Here we have put the phrase "petty-bourgeois Proudhon" into quotation marks. That naturally does not mean that we suddenly dispute the petty-bourgeois character of Proudhon's line of thought or even so much as wish to put it in doubt. Rather, in this respect, as we have already said earlier, the later works of Proudhon have only confirmed what Marx wrote about Proudhon in 1847. But there is a great difference between how Marx uses the description "petty-bourgeois" as a scientific characteristic, and the way in which today often "petty-bourgeois" is used as identical shorthand for philistine [*spießbürgerlich*], limited, and bereft of ideas. And everyone who has engaged more closely with his writings must protest against applying the phrase in this latter sense to Proudhon. He is a petty-bourgeois in the sense in which Marx identified the position of the political and literary representatives of this class in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: that "[i]n their education and individual position they may be as far apart from them as heaven from earth" from the class itself and are only representatives of the petty-bourgeois insofar as they

> in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter in practice.[1]

And if this is the case with Proudhon, then that had its good reason and, as paradoxical as this may sound, represents all the same a relative advance compared to the great mass of his socialist precursors and contemporaries in France.

Until Proudhon, French socialism had been substantially utopian-experimental. It had produced very ingenious theories and insights into the laws and tendencies of societal development, albeit ones that, as socialism, either remained mere theory or gave rise to experiments that in their scope and inner nature had no bearing on the prescribed radical transformation of society. As magnificently as they were planned, when it came to their practical implementation, they shrank down to minuscule dimensions and in this way disclosed the contradiction between the actual state of development and the speculation that had hurried on ahead of it. Conspiratorial-revolutionary communism dreamed of bringing about through grandiose confiscations conditions that would make possible a societal revolution in the vein of Babeuf, but about the *how* it offered nothing better than uncertain phrases, and the year 1848 has shown that in the Revolution itself as well it only knew how to operate with phrases, that, in order to call up the masses against the capitalist parties, it repeatedly found it expedient to put out purely national-political slogans instead of social-revolutionary ones. Finally, Louis Blanc wanted to remove the contradiction between the actual level of societal development and the socialist state of society that he had in mind through state financing of producer cooperatives *grosso modo*, which similarly would have had to fail in its execution due to a thousand difficulties and inner contradictions.[2]

Proudhon saw these mistakes, yet without clarifying to himself the final reason for them. In fact, he provides no argument against them that would not have been deployed against the relevant systems and projects in the contemporary bourgeois literature—without considering the contemporary and preceding literature, one will overestimate the effect of any author—except that he, since he placed himself on the socialist side, understood utopianism and grasped the inner contradictions of the socialist system he had in front of him. That he searched for a way to let socialism develop out of existing society and its needs was progress all the same. Now, however, the society that he saw before him was still to a great degree petty-bourgeois. Although France had factories and factory industries, by far the most decisive role in the country's production was played by farming and petty-bourgeois production. And since Proudhon fell into the trap of his predecessors, whom he had attacked so thunderously, of

wanting to build socialism on the basis of deductive principles and formulas, and even surpassed them in this regard, the end of the story could only be an apotheosis of the existing society. In a petty-bourgeois society, "justice"—Proudhon's critical measurement criterion—could only sanction what was to this society's benefit.

Whenever his scientific delusions did not get in the way, Proudhon considered himself thoroughly a member of the working class from which he had come. But a member of the working class in a petty-bourgeois societal order. From the confusion of this worker with the proletarian of developed capitalist society flow many of the screaming contradictions that we come across in him, the often ludicrous contrast between the grandiloquence of his turns of phrase and the minuscule nature of his results. The verdict that Marx renders about him in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, the position that he is allocated there relative to the bourgeois and the proletarian, communism and bourgeois economics, that "he is merely the petty bourgeois, continually tossed back and forth" between the two, Proudhon himself later confirmed, when just about at the end of his career he remarked that it had been an error on his part to assume, following Hegel, that contradictions sublate [*aufheben*] one another, that they rather only "balance each other out".[3] The latter is in fact the necessary philosophy of a petty-bourgeois society, since the stage of development that follows it does not yet bring a negation of the contradictions that play out in it, and if Proudhon confesses this, then that is only logical given his presuppositions. It shows him to be a better logician than the supposed followers of scientific socialism, who today are crabbing around with historical materialism. Here again they have an example of how philosophy in the last instance is again still dominated by humans' societal mode of existence, rooted in the relations of production.

In *The Class Struggles in France*, Marx uncovered with great clarity the secret of the contrast between the wishes of the French socialist revolutionaries and their actions when he writes:

> The struggle against capital in its developed, modern form, in its decisive aspect, the struggle of the industrial wage-worker against the industrial bourgeois, is in France a partial phenomenon, which after the February days could so much the less supply the national content of the revolution, since the struggle against capital's secondary modes of exploitation … was still hidden in the general uprising against the finance aristocracy.[4]

And:

> In France, the petty bourgeois does what normally the industrial bourgeois would have to do; the worker does what normally would be the task of the petty bourgeois.[5]

The unique historical development of a country, its temperament and tradition, can lead to situations that contradict the state of economic-political development, but the result is then always that the classes act differently than they would according to their actual natures. This incongruity is also found elsewhere, for instance in a changed form in Germany today, where thanks to the wisdom of its statesmen the growth of the Social-Democratic Party has far outstripped general political developments, and the party of the proletariat hence also does quite a few things that other classes would normally have to do.

The demagogue seeks to help themselves overcome such incongruities between the words they proclaim and the deeds they perform through the arts of sophistry; they lie about their actions, they lie about their enemies, they lie about the entire situation. This can be traced everywhere, and the 1848 February Revolution provides the most striking examples for this. Proudhon was no demagogue, and this makes us inclined to forgive him somewhat. Certainly, we cannot say that he honoured the truth under all circumstances. Where his doctrine was concerned, he could also adulterate the facts [*den Tatsachen Gewalt antun*], and it sometimes seems to have been impossible for him even to see the truth. But the fundamental streak of his political authorhood is a high degree of honesty, and this, as well as his very astute judgement wherever the aforementioned preconditions are absent, make his political writings well worth reading even today. He is a man who always has something to say, and precisely because his ambigenous [*zwieschlächtig*] nature was rooted in the state of development of the French and especially the Parisian working class, his critique of persons and events often hits the nail on the head. Other politicians and journalists, feistier or less prone to self-criticism, represented the fantasies of the Parisian workers; he represented their reality.

In this respect, he is very well characterised by a letter that he wrote to his friend Maurice on the morning after the February Revolution, on 25 February 1848. We see him here take a sceptical stance towards the Revolution, and yet he is enough of a proletarian to let himself be carried along by it. He writes:

You know, my dear Maurice, what I think of these political impoverishments that one pompously calls inalienable rights of the people, like the general franchise, government by majorities, the parliamentary régime, etc. I am looking for something more positive, and for that reason, as little as I thought of yesterday's defeated system, I do not have much faith in the system of today (i.e., the Republic).

However, I must report to you what happened to me. Early in the morning yesterday, on Thursday, I got moving and went reconnoitring. More than five hundred barricades cleave the streets and crossroads of Paris: it is a labyrinth of five hundred Thermopylaes. Around lunchtime, after I had had a good look at everything, I turned up at the office of *Réforme*, in Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, near the *Hôtel des Postes*. The radical committee which, the day before, had only demanded the retraction of the September laws, along with some other insignificant tat; which, yesterday morning, added to it electoral reform *on a broad basis*; which, at lunchtime, further insisted on the *organisation of labour*, along with I know not what other platitude, at 2 o'clock spoke of proclaiming the Republic. After President Flocon had reinvigorated us with a citation from Robespierre, like a captain who shares out *aqua vitae* among his troops, I received the task to set the following in large letters at a printing-press:

'Citizens, Louis Philippe is having you murdered like Charles X; may he go and join Charles X!'

This, I believe, was the first republican manifesto. "Citizen", Father Flocon said to me in the printer's where I was working, "You have a revolutionary post, we are counting on your patriotism." "You can count", I answered, laughing, "on the fact that I will not leave my work before it is done'.

A quarter of an hour after the proclamation I mentioned was distributed, the shooting began in the Palais Royal, and soon after the Tuileries were taken. This was my part in the Revolution.

I was in the middle of the uprising, and one moment the gentlemen thought that the army would chase the rebels onto our side, in order to relieve the *Hôtel des Postes*; so we were reasonably in danger. The office of *Réforme* was also abandoned. I do not delude myself that I am especially brave, but I can assure you that I was glad to see the excitement of all these people, while I observed examples of noble and grotesque features.

Further, I have to reproach myself for having ripped up a tree on the Place de la Bourse, stoved in a grating on the Boulevard de la Bonne Nouvelle, and brought stones to build barricades. …

All in all, the worker is worth more than his leaders. He is at the same time cheerful, brave, jocular, and honest. The eighty thousand people gathered around Paris were doing nothing more than a simple patrol. The only

> ones who were frightened, I assure you, are the bourgeois and the intellectuals. All the same, it must be said that even though the worker has proved his audacity, he did not meet with serious resistance. It is the demoralisation of the government and of the army that did all of this. The success of an uprising does not depend, as one imagines, on an actual battle; it comes above all, and even uniquely, from the generality and the speed of the movement. To have this effect, it is thus necessary to engage the troops at various points, to make them chase the rebellion from barricade to barricade, while raising more of them everywhere; and then, when the initial impulse has swept everybody up, so that the city is all topsy-turvy, and the army is having second thoughts, is hesitating; the government and the parliament retreat; the people advances, and it is over. But I am no less convinced of the fact that with ten thousand men-at-arms who had wanted to carry out their duties, a general would easily have dealt with the uprising; and in fact, I prepared myself for a new Vendémiaire.[6]

What a tone of *joie de vivre* suffuses this letter despite all its scepticism, what belief in the mass speaks out of it. One can see that, despite everything, Proudhon was a democrat in his bones, he only needed a slight push and from behind the scholar the worker emerged. But he was to experience a great disappointment. Three to four years later, he no longer writes that the worker is better than his leaders; then, for him,

> this people [is] a frightful animal that one cannot even treat as human at all, but must first convert to humanity … one human in 10,000 animals, is that proportion not still estimated too high?

Then he has "enough of this low mass", then it becomes an article of faith for him that

> the poorest (today the most numerous) class, by the fact alone that it is the poorest, is also the most ungrateful, most jealous, most immoral, and most cowardly.

We take the latter citation from the final volume of Diehl's work about Proudhon, which has just appeared.[7] In his book, which provides the occasion for the present article, Diehl addresses Proudhon's general life-trajectory and social philosophy, and thereby naturally also goes into Proudhon's political activity. His book is written with warmth and understanding, equally free of uncritical apologism and of excessively upfront critique—in its own way, probably the most detailed and best biography of

Proudhon that exists in German so far. However, although we gladly recognise this and add that individual parts of the book seem to well deserve a positive predicate, we cannot grant this attribute to the entire work. Firstly, it is unevenly worked-through. It skips over very important aspects of Proudhon's publishing activity, while covering matters that are quite a lot less important at far greater length than they deserve. Secondly, incidentally just like already in the previous volumes as well, there is a disturbing tendency in the critical parts of the book that we would like to describe as stuttering critique: a perennial shying-away from the verdict it points towards, a persistent tendency to self-correct, moderate, relent in tone, which is certainly very lovely and humane, but which still does not belong in a complete piece of writing. Diehl gives the impression that he is constantly taken aback by himself and would frequently like to whisper into the reader's ear: "But that is only to be said *entre nous.*" Thirdly, his critique is in individual points excessive and even directly wrong. About historical materialism, e.g., passages are presented which one would have to class as malicious distortion if the author in all harmlessness did not rectify them himself immediately afterwards. In this way, Diehl manages on p. 182 among other unbelievable things to say that, according to the materialist conception of history, human history is split "into two parts":

> the first epoch up to the beginning of the socialist economic system is the time without ideals, without immutable fundamental moral principles; in short, a time in which, as Engels himself says *verbatim*, humans lead an animalistic existence; only then begins the second epoch, where humans shall be allowed to aspire to ideal goals.

Literally: "as Engels himself says *verbatim*"! Immediately afterwards, on p. 183, however, we read what Engels "really says", and now we read:

> With the seizing of the means of production by society, […] for the first time, man, *in a certain sense*, is *finally* marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of Nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation.[8]

Was Herr Diehl really not conscious at all of the difference that lies between what he lets Engels say "*verbatim*" and what he cites from Engels?

We could provide a fair number of other similar contradictions between interpretation and citation, even if they do not always so immediately leap out at us and are not quite so crass, but this one example will be enough.

One of the chapters to which Diehl only did partial service is his examination of the influence that Proudhon's activity as a daily article-writer and representative of certain doctrines exerted on his contemporaries and the following generation. Diehl made matters somewhat too easy for himself in various ways. So, for instance, he traces opportunistic tendencies that have revealed themselves in the socialist movement straightforwardly back to Proudhon's own or Proudhonian theories, without providing any evidence for this other than that these tendencies were followed by the advancement of similar demands to those formulated by Proudhon. But if this were the criterion, then Proudhon would be able to point to a mighty circle of students, well into Marxism itself.

If, for example, we go into Proudhon's social theories in detail, then we see him—a man who so vigorously challenged the idea of producer cooperatives in general—not only permitting but even endorsing them for the great monopoly industries.[9] On the other hand, we see socialists today who would insist very strongly that they are not Proudhonians saying that, for the time being, they merely want to socialise the larger, already-centralised industries. These two positions are superficially very close, however fundamentally different the line of thinking is in each of these cases.

Proudhon had a strongly opportunistic vein, which by the way did not prevent him from remaining an independent, oft-hunted man the entire length of his life. This—his opportunism—is a point where Marx perhaps judged him somewhat too harshly. On a previous occasion, we attributed Proudhon's relationship with the prince Napoleon and Napoleon III to the inventor's drive to bring their universal means to bear on the man.[10] Diehl puts the same thing more mildly, along the lines that Proudhon was in fact "in the first instance a social reformer", and for that reason, like Owen too, was prepared to use every way that presented itself to him that promised to lead towards realising the reform he strove for even by a single further step. We are always inclined when judging the motives of human action to apply the milder interpretation, and we can do so all the more in this case since Diehl's assessment aligns very well with our own. Even with Owen, the inventor from time to time stepped very noticeably into the foreground, and the inventor's opportunism—the word by which we want to characterise the inclination to ignore the actual demands of the moment for the sake of possibilities for which the substantive preconditions are

lacking—made itself felt quite unpleasantly. If Owen nevertheless never came under suspicion of being a servant of princes [*Fürstendiener*], then this is partly down to the nature of his reform projects, and partly to the conditions in which he was active. Proudhon was, in this we agree with Diehl, no more than Owen a servant of princes in the conventional sense of the word. Incidentally, Marx also never insinuated that he was. If at times Proudhon in his own way lent his services to princes who had the least right to claim them, then he did so misled by doctrinaire vagaries.

Opportunist and doctrinaire—the two intersect with Proudhon in the most remarkable way. Opportunistic evaluations prompt him to endorse any criterion, and any tactic. But it does not work to explain them through reasons of opportunism. Instead, for that a doctrine must be fabricated, and an eternal principle summoned in favour of it. On another occasion, a different tactic appears, and a different criterion is appropriate to the time, and that must naturally also be derived from a principle. Hence the many contradictions, which at first glance are impossible to unify, that at first repel or confuse everyone who approaches his writings. But if one knows this inclination and his way of reasoning more precisely, then these contradictions resolve themselves, now that one knows that, where he still speaks so apodictically—I almost want to say, precisely where he speaks quite so apodictically—what he says is always only to be taken in relative terms.

But only the fewest people who have read his political writings and in particular his daily essays are conscious of this, which is why the influence that he exercised as a publicist has become so fateful. If one reads his political essays retrospectively in combination, then one cannot fail to admit that the man was fundamentally better than his reputation—we mean the reputation that he enjoys among socialists today. It is more his manner of expressing himself than the substance wherein his political essays are lacking. However much he has occasionally erred, in the deciding moments we mostly see him in the right place.

That he ultimately did his part in the February days is not to be rated all that highly. To be swept along by a mighty popular movement that confronts a generally-despised government is not a particularly great feat. But his courageous support of the defeated June Days fighters during the state of siege deserves to be recognised, as does his provocative proclamation of socialism in the National Assembly, which was raging against socialism, however wrongheaded the economic justification of socialism that he delivered in that chamber.[11] One must not forget that, for his audience, the June Days struggle concerned a very low-ranking class of workers, and that the

many marches by workers who had been regimented into the National Workshops had riled up precisely the petty bourgeoisie against the "hordes who are paid to do nothing". Even people like Flocon had only had words of embitterment towards the uprising.[12] Then it was no small matter that Proudhon, under the state of siege as we said, argued in the *Représentant du Peuple* that the English worker placidly accepted poor relief, the German one did not blush to go from workshop to workshop begging for pennies to live off (then still broadly correct), but the French one

> demands only work; and if instead of that you offer him alms, he is outraged and shoots at you. I still prefer the French worker, and I revel in belonging to this proud race, inaccessible to dishonour.[13]

Or when on 31 July he calls out to the members of the National Assembly who are barracking his speech with partly childish, partly puerile interruptions:

> If I say *we*, then I am identifying myself with the proletariat; and if I say *you*, then I am identifying you with the bourgeoisie.

It is also his doing that the socialist working class raised its head again so quickly after the setback of the June massacre. From then on, we see him challenging the reactionary policy of the pure republicans of the *National*, who were ruling in the chamber, with great literary strength and acuity in his newspaper, and exposing the mistakes and contradictions of the constitution they elaborated, and declaring himself against the presidency in particular with great energy. It was perhaps his best period. He had become the hope, the literary leader of the socialist working class, and at least then he did not disappoint them. His essays from that epoch betray—at least where his credit utopia is not concerned—forensic analysis and breadth of vision that is typically the least likely to be found in the organs of struggling democracy. He was no flatterer of the people [*Volksschmeichler*], he hated and fought against revolutionary parasites. If some of his expressions today seem ultra-philistine, then one should not forget that they are the manifestation of a reaction against an ultra-cynical demagoguery that was fateful for nobody more than the aspiring working class. Since today it seems to be rather becoming the custom again to present the worker without distinction as the epitome of all insight and virtue, one should perhaps remind people that the worker's class situation produces not just

specific virtues but also specific vices, certain insights as well as certain limitations.

As a deputy, Proudhon voted against the constitution of the French Republic resolved by the chamber on 4 November 1848, and he justified this in a statement about it given in the *Moniteur*, which in itself is in any case entirely logical. To abstain in such an important matter, he writes, would seem to him inappropriate. On the other hand, he had not voted against the constitution just because it contained things that he did not approve of, and did not contain others that he would have wished to see in it. That would have been an insufficient reason to reject it. Rather, he opposed any constitution that included the principle of the separation of state powers into a legislative and an executive power. He writes:

> I find that in a Republic a constitution is perfectly useless; I think that the provisional arrangement that we have had for eight months could very well be made definitive, with a bit more regularity and a bit less respect for monarchical traditions; I am convinced that the constitution, whose first act will be to create this presidency, with its prerogatives, its ambitions, its culpable aspirations, will be far more a danger than a guarantee for freedom.[14]

Events very soon proved Proudhon right. In the presidential election, he supported the protest candidate Raspail, since he wanted to vote neither for Cavaignac nor for Ledru-Rollin, and saw in Louis Bonaparte quite correctly the candidate of monarchist reaction.[15] He realised that abstention by the radical socialists could only help Bonaparte by lowering the number for the absolute majority. The election of Raspail was out of the question, but the socialist workers, who would not have voted for the man who defeated the June Fighters or for the already-compromised Ledru-Rollin under any circumstances, must be prevented from letting themselves be swept into expressing their protest against Cavaignac by voting for Bonaparte.[16] Proudhon counted, like incidentally most of the Republicans, on there being a runoff vote between Bonaparte and Cavaignac, and would have voted in this for Cavaignac. The articles in which he attacked his candidacy are, viewed in this light, exemplars of political tact. He characterises him as the candidate of capital, of profit (of "net product", as he expresses himself) *sans phrase*, as the presidential candidate who out of all of them was the most brusquely opposed to socialism, but he avoids insulting him personally, or casting aspersions on him with invectives and personal suspicions, which would have made it impossible to support him in the runoff,

or which would have had to make any such support ineffective or let it appear ludicrous. And in that, we can ultimately still learn from him today. Regardless of whether in this specific case the purpose of the tactic he outlined was correct or not, once one knows or can predict that, as things stand, one will be forced sooner or later to temporarily cooperate with some opponent or other, then it is fundamentally only a requirement of cleverness to adjust one's language towards them appropriately as well. Not to mention that the method, whether out of convenience or sensationalism, of always immediately suspecting others' motives and other personal tearing-down, once it has become a habit, does not tend to stop at one's political enemies. Then too polemics between comrades of the same party will rarely come to a refreshing conclusion.

Proudhon writes on the eve of the election:

> Cavaignac, I tell you, represents capital, but purely and brutally, without mixing in theocracy, monarchy, or other baubles; capital denuded of its old formulas, and reduced to its economic expression. … Out of MM. Bonaparte, Thiers or Molé, Larochejaquelin or Montalembert, Lamartine, Ledru-Rollin, and Cavaignac—Raspail aside, as ever—we hence prefer the latter. The reason, it seems to us, is now easy to imagine. With Bonaparte, we would have before us capital, and furthermore the Empire, glory, adventures, the expedition into Spain or Russia, the silence of freedom: *Siluit terra in conspectu eius* [And the earth was quiet before him]!—A backward-striving candidate; a complicated question.[17]

In the same way, all the others except for Ledru-Rollin were candidates first of capital and then of all manner of incidental endeavours, which complicated the matter. The latter he describes as the candidate simultaneously of capital and of certain anti-capitalist efforts, a man of transition, of mediation, and precisely for that reason no candidate for the moment of struggle, but rather at most a reserve candidate for the election after the victory has been won.

> Cavaignac alone represents capital, without augmentation or diminution, without equivocation, without addition. He is the son of a regicide, a simple bourgeois, not besotted with constitutional theories, neither Catholic nor philanthropist. … Cavaignac alone is acceptable to us as President of the Republic, we want to say as our opponent. With him, Catholicism, royalty, the feudal system, or constitutionalism will not embarrass us; no reservations will compromise us. …

> So for that reason, without worrying about the personal worth or the private virtues of the individuals, […] we do not hesitate to declare that we passionately wish to see as President of a Republic that is not ours, but whose laws we are prepared to submit to as a minority, the man who, by himself as well as by the force of circumstances, presents himself as the negation of socialism personified, who represents the counter-revolutionary principle of capital with the greatest frankness and energy.—
>
> Yes, General, you are our enemy, and because you are our enemy we will avoid denigrating you. …[18]

There is some sophistry in his deductions, since Cavaignac too would not have been "capital". But such abstraction is permitted in the moment of struggle and is even inevitable. Besides, as has been said, for Proudhon it was a matter of gleaning the most favourable side of the sole republican candidate who came into question besides Bonaparte, without giving away anything as a socialist after all.

Louis Bonaparte won with a majority that had a quite crushing effect on all republicans. Only a few months later, we see Proudhon on the run and then in prison. He had used ever more decisive language against a reaction that was showing its true colours more and more, and the Chamber had delivered him with great satisfaction over to the police courts. He urges a joining of forces [*Zusammenschluss*] by all republican elements, legal resistance (refusing to pay taxes, etc.), and ultimately, when in January 1850 new repressive measures are ordered, Proudhon urges his friend Darimon from prison now to use revolutionary language in the *Voix du Peuple*.

> When press freedom is suppressed, the people disarmed, official personnel is kitted out, when all rights, all laws are trodden underfoot, there is no more purpose in discussing authority or *auto-democracy* in peace. … Our final argument, the sanction of our criticism, is an *uprising*. I would not bear the shame of being a journalist when the freedom of the press is suppressed, I must speak or break my pens. …
>
> They want to encroach on the Republic and on freedom; it is time that the revolution turns from a socialist one, as we have exclusively made it for four months now, into a Jacobin one. … Above all, revolutionary ardour and the *élan* of the Montagnard and the insurrectionary.[19]

That too is opportunism, albeit in the other direction. For Proudhon, however absolutely he might express himself, there is no tactic that is binding under all circumstances.

In prison, apart from articles for the *Voix du Peuple*, Proudhon wrote his *Confessions of a Revolutionary* and his *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*.[20] The former book, which already appeared in German in 1850, is a historical-philosophical examination of France's development from the Restoration up to the February Revolution, as well as the Revolution's course until summer 1849, combined with a kind of autopsychological analysis of Proudhon's conduct in the Revolution. Just as his historical philosophy evinces all manner of contrived constructions, Proudhon's self-critique evinces several uncomfortable examples of histrionics, but besides that the book contains very many fitting explanations, and acts in some places as a very interesting and thoroughly readable counterpoint to both of Marx's writings about the same time-period. However different the perspectives are from which both authors proceed, and however different their methods are too, in the final result their critique coincides surprisingly often. Marx starts from class currents and contradictions, and lets parties appear as reflections of these; whereas Proudhon also speaks a lot about classes, but in reality describes only parties and the role of major party figures, yet he does this with such acute analysis that he still mostly comes upon the true connections between things. It is Proudhon who has not yet lost his faith in the working class, and whose dialectic hence is not yet ailed by the pallidness of his later doubt.

Among other things, in his *Confessions* Proudhon justifies in greater detail his aforementioned vote against the constitution, specifically his opposition to all constitutions, and his "anarchism". As is well-known, Proudhon's anarchism is in no way the same as what presents itself under this name today, but rather quite simply a theory of federalism.[21] And if one looks past Proudhon's convoluted way of expressing himself, as well as certain exaggerations that have now become second nature to him, then the federalism he develops aligns in almost all essential points with the picture that Marx produces in *The Civil War in France*, section III, of the societal form that has to take the place of the repressive state, which has to realise the self-government of society. Only that Proudhon derives dialectically from dogmatic concepts what in Marx appears as the product of societal development, as the necessary political form of the abolition of class rule and the emancipation of the proletariat. With Proudhon, it is the form that determines the content. Marx says that only a certain content can lend the form its significance, and without the rule of the working class the communal constitution would be a deception. But that Marx's "anarchism" does not only date from 1870 is shown by *The Poverty of Philosophy*, the *Communist Manifesto*, and *The Class Struggles in France*.

Proudhon's strength, and at the same time his doom, was his playing with concepts, his addiction to proving and deriving everything from everything else. Hence we see him, who offered such vigorous resistance to the *coup d'état* that was being prepared—and whom then the *coup* drove to the most extreme pessimism and to the exorbitant statements of despair about the working class cited above—shortly thereafter deluding himself that he could deceive the perpetrator of the *coup d'état* about its meaning and significance by means of his dialectic. Naturally, this work of art did not succeed, just as similar attempts have always failed. Napoleon could not have felt any less called to carry out "social revolution" as Proudhon understood it. He had enough to do with carrying out the things that Proudhon had predicted would be the effects of the *coup d'état* before it took place, at a point when he had not yet become resigned to pessimism.

One will perhaps judge the work *Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'État of 2 December 1852* most accurately if one regards it as the fruit of its author's despair about the capacity of the working class to take its emancipation in hand itself, and to realise it in a constant struggle.[22] Hence the sudden appeal to social reform from above, which only a few years beforehand he had so categorically and with overweening exaggerations declared to be unacceptable in any form vis-à-vis Louis Blanc. As an opponent of class struggle, which he had never properly understood, he could also hardly reach a different conclusion. The same circumstance explains his exaggerated attacks on the general franchise, which incidentally remained a mystery to him for his entire life—one that he praised and cursed in alternation, as the savage does a fetish. One time he declares "universal suffrage is the counter-revolution", and calls it "an unhappy invention of the bourgeois Louis Blanc and Ledru-Rollin", only to write at another time:

> Grant me the exercise of universal suffrage in perpetuity, and I accept in advance all the products of universal suffrage.[23]

The latter was written in summer 1849, when the franchise was still producing radical outcomes. But one can conclude from these contradictions only that societal reform and republican freedoms lay higher in his estimation than the general franchise. He saw its potential power perfectly well. He says at one point: "universal suffrage is a contradiction to the subordination of labour to capital".[24] But the contradiction between this potential

power of the general franchise and its reality—that he did not manage to get beyond. He sought the reason for it everywhere, in the character and the level of education of the French people, in its form, and a thousand other things. Only in one place did he not seek it: in the economic structure of France at the time.

He remained unable to elevate himself above this so far as to have a clear view over it. And hence—despite his intellectual gifts, his ponderings, his studies, the deficiencies of his dialectic, despite his proletarian sympathies, which burst forth so strongly anew in his *Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, where, *inter alia*, he also hails the International that had just been founded—the petty-bourgeois character of his critique and his reform of society.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 11: Marx and Engels 1851–53* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), pp. 130–1.
2. [Ed. B.—It is correct that the National Workshops of 1848 represent a caricature of Blanc's plan, not its realisation. But every attempt to realise a plan built on false presuppositions will lead to a caricature of this plan, and even if they had been instituted with less bad faith, the National Workshops would have had to miserably come a cropper as things stood. Lassalle wholly avoided this point, which is precisely what it came down to, in his response to his opponents, who levelled the National Workshops against him.]
3. Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the *Philosophy of Poverty* by M. Proudhon', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–48* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 178.
4. Karl Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 10: Marx and Engels 1849–51* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), p. 57.
5. Ibid., p. 117.
6. [Ed. B.—The counterrevolutionary uprising of 13 Vendémiaire of Year IV (5 October 1795) against the Convent, defeated by Bonaparte. As late as 21 February, Proudhon had, by his own admission, insistently counselled his friends against taking part in the impending uprising, and on 22 February breathed a sigh of relief when the uprising seemed to be averted through a compromise.] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'A M. Maurice, 25 février', in Amédée-Jérôme Langlois (ed.), *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon, vol. 2* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875), pp. 280–3.

7. [Ed. B.—Dr. Karl Diehl, *P. J. Proudhon: His Doctrine and his Life. Third volume: "His life and his Social Philosophy"*. Jena, Gustav Fischer. vi and 239 pp. gr. 80. 4.50 marks.]
8. Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 24: Marx and Engels 1874–83* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), p. 323.
9. [Ed. B.—"Is this a question of large-scale production in manufacturing, extractive, metal, and maritime industry? It is clear that there is a place for the association here: nobody would contest this anymore. Is it, however, a question of one of these great enterprises that have the character of a public service, such as the railways, the credit institutions, the docks? I proved elsewhere that it is a law of mutuality that these services, excluding all capital profit, are delivered to the public at the price equivalent to the cost of exploitation and maintenance. In this case too, it is entirely evident that the guarantee of good execution and cheapness cannot be provided either by monopoly companies or by *communautés* patronised by the State, exploiting in the name of the State, and at the cost of the State. This guarantee can only come from free associators [*sociétaires*], obligated on the one hand towards the public by the contract of mutuality, and on the other hand towards one another by the conventional associative contracts."

   "Is it ultimately a matter of the hundreds of industries and shops that we have in such great numbers in the cities and even in the towns? Here I can no longer see the necessity or the usefulness of the producers' association." (*On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, pp. 135–6). Following this final sentence, Proudhon declares the association—with him always identical to the productive association—superfluous in these latter cases precisely because there their hoped-for advantage can be attained through institutions of mutuality (reciprocal insurance, etc.).]
10. [Ed. B.—cf. *Neue Zeit*, 9/2, p. 528.]
11. See Marius S. Ostrowski (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein on the German Revolution: Selected Historical Writings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 303–38.
12. Ferdinand Flocon (1800–1866), French journalist and republican politician, member of the Carbonari during the 1820s, editor of *La Réforme* (1843–1848), publishing articles by Mikhail Bakunin, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, member of the Constituent Assembly after the 1848 French Revolution.
13. [Ed. B.—Letter to the *Représentant du Peuple*, 5 July 1848.] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'Adhésions à la banque d'échange', in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Œuvres Complètes, vol. 1: Mélanges, Articles de Journaux 1848–1852* (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven & Co., 1868), p. 92.

14. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'Au redacteur', *Moniteur universel* 310 (5 November 1848), p. 3092.
15. Charles-Louis Napoléon III Bonaparte (1808–1873), first President of France (1848–1852) and after his *coup d'état* in December 1851 the last French monarch (1852–1870), ousted after the comprehensive defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Louis-Eugène Cavaignac (1802–1857), French general and politician, Minister of War and President of the Council of Ministers June–December 1848, commander of the government troops during the June Days uprising. Alexandre Ledru-Rollin (1807–1874), French lawyer and progressive-republican politician, founder of the newspaper *La Réforme*, instituted universal male suffrage as Minister of the Interior in the 1848 provisional government. François-Vincent Raspail (1794–1878), French chemist, physician, naturalist, lawyer, and socialist politician, member of the Freemasons and the Carbonari, founder of the newspaper *L'Ami du Peuple*, supporter of the Paris Commune and signatory of the "Manifesto of the 363" during the 16 May 1877 constitutional crisis in the nascent Third Republic.
16. [Ed. B.—"The votes for Raspail … were to be merely a demonstration, so many protests against any presidency, that is, against the constitution itself, so many votes against Ledru-Rollin, the first act by which the proletariat, as an independent political party, declared its separation from the democratic party." Marx would have barely observed a different tactic at the time than Proudhon.] Marx, 'Class Struggles in France', p. 81.
17. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'Cavaignac', in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Œuvres Complètes, vol. 1: Mélanges, Articles de Journaux 1848–1852* (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven & Co., 1868), p. 213.
18. Ibid., pp. 214–16.
19. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'A M. Darimon, 15 janvier', in Amédée-Jérôme Langlois (ed.), *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon, vol. 3* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875), p. 84.
20. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire pour servir à l'histoire de la Revolution de février* (Paris: Garnier Frères, Libraires, 1851).
21. Present volume, p. 268ff.
22. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La revolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 décembre* (Paris: Garnier Frères, Libraires, 1852).
23. Proudhon, *Confessions*, p. 207.
24. Ibid., p. 180.

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CHAPTER 22

Two Political Programmatic Symphonies

Neue Zeit 15/2(37–38) (June 1897), pp. 331–9, 367–74.

I. A Socialist Symphony

Several instruments tuned to one keynote—I do not know whether an expert would define the concept of a symphony like that, but one will permit a layperson to use the word in this way. A tendency has emerged in recent times to compile essays by various people on the same topic or about various aspects of the same problem in a single book, and thus to provide the audience with a kind of literary symphony. It speaks to the spirit of an age that does a lot of reading but—as far as the mass of the reading public is concerned—above all wants to read quickly. Like the novel, the treatise today is also supposed to be travel reading [*Eisenbahnliteratur*]. From a different angle, the spirit of specialisation in our time motivates such collective works, as well as a democratic sentiment. Why should Plato also speak for Glaucon, Thrasymachus, and Cleomenes, when he is offering us his dissertation about the state? Why not hear these people themselves? And ultimately this form of publication reflects the commercial motto of the present: it has to pull in the crowds.

Two literary symphonies, or if one wishes, symposia of a political character have just appeared on the English book market. Both have a claim on our interest as characteristic documents of the intellectual struggle that is playing out in the camp of the English reform parties today, as

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M. S. Ostrowski, *Eduard Bernstein on Socialism Past and Present*,
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pronouncements of ideas that battle to win over England's democracy. The voices that we see there certainly carry with them the weight of recognised authority to very different degrees, but they stem from people who, insofar as they have not themselves gained experience or prestige in the struggle, still show that they are serious about it. We hear in one of the books the voices of renowned representatives of a new party, and in the second the voices of young representatives—the youth wing of an old party. The first book is entitled *Forecasts of the Coming Century*.[1] It comprises ten essays by various authors, nearly all of them members of the Independent Labour Party or its close allies. One of the ten, *William Morris*, no longer numbers among the living, but his contribution, "The Socialist Ideal in Art", he himself still intended for the book at hand. The other nine authors are: *Alfred Russel Wallace*, the well-known and highly-regarded natural researcher and co-discoverer of the theory of development named after Darwin; *Tom Mann*, *H. Russell Smart*, Miss *Enid Stacy*, and Miss *Margaret McMillan*, all of them outstanding members of the Independent Labour Party; well-known Darwinist and novelist *Grant Allen*; the Fabian *G. Bernard Shaw*; as well as the socialists *Henry S. Salt* and *Edw. Carpenter*, who in wider circles are also known as art writers and poets (the latter belonged at the start of the 1880s to the Social Democratic Federation and helped found *Justice*).[2] Wallace, who has been a land reformer for more than a lifetime, writes about "Reoccupation of the Land", Tom Mann about "Trade Unionism and Co-Operation", Russell Smart: "Programme for a Socialist Parliament", Miss Stacy: "A Century of Women's Rights", Miss McMillan: "Means and Ends in Education", Grant Allen: "Natural Inequality", Bernard Shaw: "Illusions of Socialism", H. Salt: "Socialism and Literature", and Edward Carpenter: "Transitions to Freedom".

Each of the authors, it says in the introduction, is only responsible for their work. Yet all the same, the book does not give the impression of having been put together arbitrarily. A certain unity seems to have been effected by the fact that each of the authors was able to see the work of their co-authors before the final edits for the whole thing were signed off, or was kept up to speed with which points they were addressing and from which perspective. So, besides the general tendency that underpins all of these pieces equally, there is also an unmistakable connection in their content, and the whole is almost free of otherwise unavoidable repetitions. On the contrary, as regards the conceptions and treatments of the object the greatest differences can be detected. From a strongly utopian idealism,

which shines out in the article by the now 75-year-old Wallace, to the thoroughly sceptical realism of Bernard Shaw, this devil's-advocate among the English socialists, these articles cover in all manner of shades a true spectrum of differences in their methods of examining and conclusions. While one, like Miss Enid Stacy, notably shies away from any exaggeration, gleaning from a mere examination of the actual facts a criterion for asking the right questions and a sensible programme of demands, we see others, like Russell Smart, e.g., after initially quite reasonable examination suddenly engaging in blue-sky speculation, and coming up with measures that seemed very radical but with closer insight into social and economic conditions turn out to be absolutely preposterous.

After all, it is difficult to offer any kind of opinion about the future that at some point does not amount to the famous battleplan: there stands the enemy and there they will be beaten, then they move over there and will be beaten there, then they flee here and will be beaten here, and if they then turn around and want to move over there then they will be destroyed out in the open. It is very tempting to come up with such a programmatic campaign, but—

> In their eternal realm no property
> Is to be struggled for—all there is general.[3]

Russell Smart constructs a socialist budget which on the one hand would have the unavoidable effect of lowering production, and which on the other hand raises immoderate demands on the taxability of the population. It offers old-age pensions from the 55th year onwards from state means, complete coverage of health insurance from state means, sustenance of several children up to their 15th year from state means, an unlimited right to work with an 8-hour day and a minimum wage, which acts as a fallback for the workers if the employers do not want to give them what they demand, etc. The year 1848 is wiped from history. How the system of suspending all duties of self-responsibility must affect the social sentiment of the mass does not bother the munificent finance minister of the future at all. One might say, he says happily, that these measures would amount to spoiling the workers, but the capitalist class would also not have anything to complain about regarding lack of provision with his fiscal policy. In order to provide the means for all the proposed expenditures, presuming the figures for today's income statistics in England, besides other taxes a tax of 50% on all income from interest and rent would be

necessary, and since this income—this much our strategist admits—might very easily sink under the effect of the various social-policy measures of his programme, then nothing will stand in the way of raising this tax to 100% of this income, "20 shillings for every pound sterling". But what happens if this 100% should also not be enough, which we must regrettably fear for various reasons? Will one then go a step further and start to tax the deficit? About one-fifth of the income from interest and rent in England comes from income from foreign government bonds, etc. Will Parliament under our friend approve receipt of this interest? A not insignificant part of annual interest and rent receipts today goes to public institutions (hospitals, schools, insurance bodies, etc.), and entirely or partly covers their budgets. If the finance minister wipes the slate clean with that, then either these institutions will have to go under, or the deficit will fall as a burden on the state. Maybe he has nothing against this. After all, the state is supposed to be the general well-doer; all blessings should come from it. He gives willingly and with full hands—in theory. But in practice, this giving would soon go its own merry way, then where there is nothing more to be got, the social-democratic Parliament has lost its right as well. The entire budget is a house of cards that collapses as soon as one comes close to it, it presumes a foundation whose buttress it destroys itself.

Just as airy is the building that Russell Smart constructs to implement the right to employment [*Recht auf Beschäftigung*]. Although he speaks of a certain criterion of efficacy and discipline, what this looks like and how it should be put into practice with an unrestricted right to employment is not asked and not answered. The question of providing opportunities for work for those who require employment is taken just as lightly. Methods whose implementation meets with the greatest difficulties even today, where state and municipality confront the individual with such great authority, are treated as things that will sort themselves out. Smart writes:

> The organisation of building departments on the lines that have proved so successful in the case of the London County Council would follow as a natural course.[4]

But even if the construction office of the London County Council has acquitted itself better than its enemies claim, whether this would have been possible under the conditions imposed by Smart must seem fairly doubtful to anyone who knows the history of this institution. The precondition of its success was the dutiful loyalty of its officials, and the strict

observation of the fundamental principle that employment by the County Council was not a right, and did not remove from the employees any of the responsibilities that any other work contract would impose on them.

Enough. We have picked out Smart's essay because in him the utopian streak reveals itself the most drastically, even though Smart visibly has the best intentions of proceeding realistically. He sets to his task in this vein, and initially says some very sensible things. The starting-point of his programme, that of introducing the lever at the three main complaints under which the worker suffers today, namely inadequacy and inconstancy of occupation, excessive length of working time, and insufficient reward for work, is entirely rationally chosen, and there is nothing to object to in the principle of his proposals insofar as they refer to this. A Parliament in which socialists have the upper hand will self-evidently be especially attentive to increasing employment opportunities and raising labour income. It will also need greater means than bourgeois parliaments, and as a result of this will have to impose greater burdens on non-labour income. But instead of being satisfied with this realisation and the general indication of the way, instead of admitting that every way of proceeding that is not gradual includes the danger that instead of the desired outcome its opposite comes about, that blind arbitrariness is thereby ruled out, the author does precisely the reverse and assures us that there are no boundaries placed on arbitrariness at all. It is not hard to follow the line of thought that leads him to say so. It is the fear that the whole thing could turn out too bourgeois, and the socialist state of the future seem to have been pushed off too far into the distance. That is the reason for his sudden leaps to 50% and 100% taxes, which have all the more curious an effect the more the author makes an effort to prove the solidity of his argument using statistical materials. But it is less a matter of proving that society is rich enough to guarantee all its members a comfortable existence, than about ascertaining the method of how to achieve this without bringing about such far-reaching disturbances in economic activity that at the given moment the possibility of the wished-for improvements disappears along with society's sources of wealth. When Smart—and he is not at all alone in this respect—arrives at this problem, he helps himself out of the matter with a leap of faith. He writes at one point:

> Even if it could be shown that the capitalist system would break down under the added strain, it would be an argument for a bolder and more drastic policy, rather than one of *laissez faire*, for it would be an admission on the

> part of the capitalists themselves that the existing economic system is unable to afford even the modern standard of comfort laid down as necessary.[5]

But the capitalist "system" is not the point here at all, but the continuation of production. The collapse of the capitalist system is the most irrelevant matter in the world, as long as this does not mean an interruption to production and paralysis of productive forces. Every time, the question is what replacement is suggested for production led by private business-owners. Where this is sufficiently lacking, or where the presumed replacement proved itself inadequate, the continued preservation of such conditions that leave space for capitalist enterprise lies as much in the interests of the workers as that of all other societal classes.[6] Every infraction against this will unavoidably lead to a reaction in favour of capitalism.

Much more sober than Smart's essay is the majority of the essay by Tom Mann about trade unions and cooperatives. Mann is thoroughly in favour of both of these forms of economic self-engagement by workers, and places great hope on the closer connection between the trade union struggle and economic co-operatives, which in some respects today has already been attained.

> Already in the productive Co-partnership movement the Trade Unionists are exercising a healthy influence.[7]

And

> Another direction in which the productive co-operative societies have been of great service, in the Midlands especially, is by affording a haven of refuge to men who have been prominent in the labour movement and are boycotted by the capitalists.[8]

But these are only incidental advantages. The main thing is that, to an increasing degree, industrial enterprises should come under the direct management of the workers. Of course, they are still surrounded by capitalist enterprises and could hence not yet enjoy the full effects of true cooperative production.

> Already, boots and shoes, clothing of all kinds, furniture, crockery, and hardware, etc., are produced in different districts, and the productive societies are gradually federating themselves together to prevent overlapping, and to render mutual assistance.[9]

In more than 130 producer cooperatives in England, the true cooperative principle has been successfully introduced, and the time has come

> when the Socialists of this country should forthwith become closely identified with one form or other of Industrial Co-operation.[10]

It is not a matter of a particular means of socialising industry.

> And whilst we work ardently through Municipal and Parliamentary Agencies, should we not be equally ready to work through Voluntary Agencies also?[11]

Where national or even international monopolies exist, it is not difficult to imagine their socialisation, on condition that public opinion is won over to it to the required degree. But that is not yet the case,

> and even if [it were], it would yet leave the larger half of our industries as not being in a state of preparedness for Nationalisation and Socialisation.[12]

But at the end, our good Tom's heart runs away with his reason, and he prophesies that after the end of the next 10 years we would probably already have achieved the 6-hour working day, abolition of heavy labour [*Schwitzarbeit*], raising the minimum age for industrial child labour to 16 years, municipalisation of food provision, worthwhile work for all, and a few other things more. Now, we shall even be happy even with somewhat less than that.

Wallace's essay is uniquely touching. It takes us back to the time when the excellent scholar was born—indeed, even further. The shadow of Robert Owen and behind him of John Bellers appears to the reader of his treatise: Foundation of labour colonies [*Arbeitskolonien*] in the countryside, where the unemployed of the great cities could find useful and healthy occupation, that is his means of again filling up the depopulated countryside, and he justifies it with arguments of which a great part are almost *verbatim* to be found in Owen and Bellers. Naturally, some new experiences are taken into consideration, and likewise he refers to today's conditions of production and intercourse. Otherwise it is the same old seductive picture of the advantages of cooperative production directed primarily towards one's own need and built on the unification of agriculture and industry. But if Wallace tells us that these domestic colonies,

> if [they are] undertaken on the principle that all production is to be, in the first place, for consumption by the workers themselves, and only when the necessary wants of all are satisfied, for exchange in order to procure luxuries, such organisation cannot fail to be a success,

then all the examples loom up before us too where in Europe colonies were constructed according to this principle, and either directly failed, or turned into distortions of what their sponsors had originally expected of them.[13]

Miss Stacy compares the two main strands of the women's movement in this century, the older, bourgeois, or as the author puts it, individualistic one, and the newer, substantially socialist one, which one also calls the proletarian one in Germany. It would not have occurred to Miss Stacy to choose this name for the latter one, since nothing in England would justify it. The associations of female workers that England has have, with vanishing exceptions, no independent existence. The majority are either branches of male workers' associations and were called into being under their leadership, or they are creations by well-meaning women of the bourgeoisie, and only exist as long as their bourgeois protectors take care of them. But there are not insignificant numbers of female socialists, and these self-evidently think of the women's movement differently than their bourgeois predecessors. Miss Stacy frames the contrast in such a way that the former are the advocates for *the rights of women as individuals*, the latter fight for all reforms that put women in the position of fulfilling their *duties as citizens*. This contrast is not absolute, since the recognition of the woman as a citizen includes these rights, but the perspective is changed: for the women's rights activist, freedom of choice in occupations is everything, for the socialist it remains a higher good, but lies below certain duties which emerge from the role of the woman as a mother. She does not see it as a wrong against a woman if the community issues certain prescriptions for women's labour that do not apply to men—assuming that there is no exaggeration in this, and that the interests of the community do not become the pretext for privileging one of the sexes. Miss Stacy recognises that much has happened in this century to make the life of woman happier, freer, and worthier of an intelligent, self-assured being. There is still much to be done. But the watchword of the future will no longer be "rights for women". The true goal of the reformers is

> to secure to each human being such conditions as will conduce to full development as an individual and a useful life of service to the community.[14]

Even without bringing in anything new, in its precise, factual way, free of all exaggerations, this article is one of the best in the book.

And now to the devil's-advocate of the English socialists, as we called him above, Herr G. Bernard Shaw. His article "Illusions of Socialism" was published a few months ago in the Vienna *Zeit*; but whether German readers will have entirely understood it seems doubtful to me.[15] It is so entirely written from within English circumstances that the foreign reader will simply not be able to understand much of it, and so the true purpose of what Shaw says will escape them. Above all, one must know the personality of the author and his position in the English movement to understand this mixture of overbearingness and candour, of obsessive satire and serious critique that appears in his articles. Shaw is one of the oldest and, in the view of the author of these lines, one of the most honest members of the contemporary socialist movement in England. With the native wit of the born Irishman, which he still strongly exhibits, he already recognised early on the misguidedness of the attempt to want to win over with a substantially pre-'48 revolutionary Romanticism a country that had had its 1848 over 200 years ago—and he would have to be no Irishman if he had not now got carried away in the other direction. So he became the fiercest opponent of Hyndman, the most highly-regarded of Marx's English disciples. If this tactical enmity has something to do with Shaw's belief in Jevons' theory of value can remain undiscussed here; it may very well have contributed to making Shaw and his sympathisers more inclined towards the line of thinking that leads to Jevonism. Incidentally, one must allow Shaw at least so much that he repeatedly stated that he was only turning against Marx's theory of value so far as it was presented in the first volume of *Capital*, but that he considered it possible and probable that it would be modified in the third volume. That the modification that it actually underwent there is not enough for him is easily understandable given the firmness with which he has committed himself to Jevonism in the meantime.

This has fully entered into his flesh and blood; it is his credo no differently than Marx's theory of value and the line of thought on which it rests is for one of that man's followers. We can see this in the essays presented here. Jevons appears here at every opportunity, and not even just his theory of value but rather the argumentation that underpins it. Marx says

once about the petty-bourgeois that he is made up of "on-the-one-hand, on-the-other-hand". Like this, the follower of Jevons is made up of "more-or-less". Since everything has its own two sides and there is a "more-or-less" everywhere, one can say a great many intelligent and correct things as a petty-bourgeois, and likewise as a Jevonian, as long as one only has the necessary wit to do so. And Shaw has this, as I have already said, in spades, perhaps too much. His wit is to a certain degree his doom. It is often hurtful through its provocative bite, and seems to many to be evidence of insufficient inner seriousness. But Shaw is so far the slave of his wit, that even where he is deadly serious a quip is most likely to escape him, and the paradox has become his second nature.

There is also no shortage of paradoxes in "Illusions of Socialism". The entire article is actually a contradiction. Shaw explains that it is not remotely his aim to rob anybody of their illusions, that illusions are necessary, indeed that "there can no more be an illusion without a reality than a shadow without an object".[16] But with that, the treatise goes beyond the necessity of the illusions for socialism into an exposé—and with that, a tearing-apart—of the characteristic illusions of socialism. This is precisely the devil's-advocate side that lies in him, of which he cannot rid himself. But

> Of all the spirits of denial
> The scamp is he I best can tolerate.[17]

Even where one cannot follow Shaw, one will always find a solid core in his critique. What he says about the dramatic illusion of socialism, which paints class struggle in modern society in the conventional manner of a small-town drama—with its hero, its villain, its shameful plotting, and the final catastrophe that brings forever undimmed blessings—that pretty much every insightful socialist will subscribe to today; indeed, the falseness of this melodramatic depiction is outlined in the writings of socialism's recognised leading spokespeople. Similarly regarding the religious illusion of socialism, even though for the Continental socialist, who has to struggle with the police and reactionary laws, the martyr still exists as a reality. By contrast, his remarks about the scientific illusion or illusory science [*wissenschaftliche oder Wissenschafts-Illusion*] of socialism will come under considerable challenge, but whoever makes the effort to think more precisely about the relationship between science and socialism will not be able to avoid agreeing with Shaw's main idea, which is that what we

conventionally call the science of socialism does not have a claim to this name—even if they may deviate from him in the details. Is, e.g., *Capital* a work of socialist science? Not at all. It is a scientific examination of the bourgeois mode of production, but which at no point where it is scientific is specifically socialist, but rather precisely wants to be free of all such tendencies. Only some conclusions are specifically socialist, but they are, like the final chapter in the first volume of *Capital*, kept very aphoristic and do not claim to evince more than general tendencies. The theory of value and all the finer examinations of *Capital* built on it leave socialist theory untouched. They say what is the case, not what should be. Science cannot be a party matter, parties can only draw their conclusions from the results of science and will in most cases only accept what conforms to their needs. The impartiality that graces the scientist is a troubling property for the partisan. If Social Democracy has a stronger drive to scientificity than other parties, then it has this above all because it strives more than them to be progressive. The latter striving is for it the primary one. So much at this point about this, perhaps we will come back to this object at some point later.

Here an extract from the end of Shaw's article as a sample of his style, as a prompt for reflection:

> It is in such ways that the will of the world accomplishes itself. Out of the illusion of "the abolition of the wage system" we shall get steady wages for everybody, and finally discredit all other sources of income as disreputable. By the illusion of the downfall of Capitalism we shall turn whole nations into Joint Stock Companies; and our determination to annihilate the *bourgeoisie* will end in making every workman a *bourgeois gentilhomme*. By the illusion of Democracy, or government by everybody, we shall establish the most powerful bureaucracy ever known on the face of the earth, and finally get rid of popular elections, trial by jury, and all the other makeshifts of a system in which no man can be trusted with power. By the illusion of scientific materialism we shall make life more and more the expression of our thought and feeling, and less and less of our craving for more butter on our bread. But in the meantime we shall continue to make fools of ourselves; to make our journals bywords for slander and vituperation in the name of fraternity; to celebrate the advent of universal peace by the most intemperate quarrelling; to pose as uneducated men of the people whilst advancing claims to scientific infallibility which would make Lord Kelvin ridiculous; to denounce the middle class, to which we ourselves belong: in short, to wallow in all the follies and absurdities of public life with the fullest conviction that we have attained

> a Pisgah region far above such Amalekitish superstitions. No matter: it has to be done in that way, or not at all. Only, please remember, still in the true Jevonian spirit, that the question is not whether illusions are useful or not, but exactly how useful they are.
>
> As the work requires more and more ability and temper, it requires more and more freedom from the cruder illusions, especially those which dramatise one's opponents as villains and fiends, and more and more of that quality which is the primal republican material—that sense of the sacredness of life which makes a man respect his fellow without regard to his social rank or intellectual class, and recognises the fool of Scripture only in those persons who refuse to be bound by any relations except the personally luxurious ones of love, admiration, and identity of political opinion and religious creed.[18]

The essays of Miss Macmillan and Messrs Grant Allen, Carpenter, and Salt address the themes indicated in their titles more or less imaginatively, but without saying anything substantially new with regard to socialism.

In general, the present book, which is very beautifully decorated, can count as a fairly faithful mirror of the socialist *Ideenwelt* of contemporary England. All the same, we find in it no specific representative of the Marxist tendency or of the section of English socialism that takes after Marx. But so much of Marx has gone over into the general movement, has been digested by it, and finds itself in it again. And that, after all, is chiefly what will interest the German reader.

II. A Sextet of Young Liberals

Whoever has the youth has the future. Insofar as this sentence is correct, one cannot exclude from it a people's academic youth. It is certainly not to be expected that the great majority of the younger members of the propertied classes, which are almost exclusively represented in the academies today, will flock to the banner of a party like the social-democratic one, but wherever the latter is at all active as a growing force within the nation, as a rule it also does not fail to have an academic followership too. For these, the phrase is more accurate if one inverts it. Whoever has the future also has the academic youth. Where the future lies or seems to lie, thither the spirited part of the academic youth, which is not fully dominated by a concern for their career, will likewise feel drawn.

In these circumstances, it can only be quite uniquely touching to come across the following passage in the introduction to an English book that came out in recent days:

> Six years ago Undergraduate Oxford tended to be Tory or Socialist: since that time we have seen an extraordinarily strong Liberal movement absorb, with one or two remarkable exceptions, most of those who care for political discussions or debates.[19]

Either Tory or socialist: that would fit the picture that a dogmatic conception of modern political developments presents as the rule, as the natural and naturally-necessary state of affairs. But an absorption of this process of division by a stronger liberal current—that is unnatural, that is an occurrence "against what is written in the stars, against fate", and in any case needs some explanation.

There is no reason to doubt the fact itself. Nobody in England has ever denied it, even socialist reviewers have printed the cited passage without demurring. Besides that, it is confirmed as far as Social Democracy is concerned by reports of Oxford from other sources. It is generally conceded that Social Democracy only numbers a small gaggle of adherents in the university and in the town of Oxford itself at the present time.

Now Oxford, however, is not only the greatest University in England, it also offers the representatives of a new political idea more than enough possibilities to propagandise for their cause. It has besides its other political discussion societies its great general debate club, where representatives of all political tendencies discuss the current questions of the day, and which hence offers rich pickings for winning followers through the power of persuasive argument. There cannot really be any talk of serious disadvantages for adherents of socialism; the university authorities do not put any barriers in the way of exercising full freedom of speech, and taking a position in Oxford's "parliament" is meaningless for the student's later career. Incidentally, for certain occupations, like for instance the priesthood in the Anglican Church, being committed to liberalism would harm the advancement of the young University man more today than declarations in favour of socialism. After all, one finds among the socialists the greatest opponents of Liberal nonconformism, this eternal competitor to the Anglican Church. If among the ranks of the Oxford youth socialism has indeed fallen behind relative to liberalism, then we do not have to seek the explanation for this in the direct influence of economic motives.

So why at the moment does liberalism appeal more than socialism to the sensibility of the radical-minded English student? The book from which we extracted the citation above gives us the answer, partly deliberately, partly by accident.

Its title is *Essays in Liberalism*, and "Six Oxford Men" are its authors. It consists of six essays by various authors, which consecutively address the following points: (1) The Liberal Tradition; (2) Liberalism and Wealth; (3) Liberals and Labour; (4) Liberalism in Outward Relations; (5) A Liberal View of Education; and (6) The Historical Basis of Liberalism. As it says in the preface, the author of the first of these essays, Mr Hilaire Belloc of Balliol College, whose "kindling eloquence [and] Liberal enthusiasm" is granted wondering recognition, is the leading mind behind this literary political campaign undertaken by the six academics.[20] Even in the essays that he did not write, much is to be traced back to his inspiration. The main aspiration that guided the authors in their collective work is the wish to clarify matters about the prevailing political forces and conditions, and work towards returning to a principled treatment of the questions before which the Liberal party saw itself placed. In its principles the party must seek the source of its power, and not in individual demands or long programmes consisting of these, and the principles which in the view of Messrs Belloc and friends the party should uphold above all were:

> Democracy actualised up to the full meaning of Bentham's formula; a degree of political idealism; and a third article intimately bound up with this last, a resolute opposition to the form under which the materialist attacks the State—Socialism.[21]

The young liberalism of the authors is, in accordance with this, anti-socialist. This is also indicated laconically by the dedication of their book to John Morley, who among the leaders of English liberalism today must be the one most decisively opposed to socialism. In the vein of Morley, who wrote a book against compromising on principles, it says in Mr Belloc's essay:

> Conviction itself has been a great deal more than shaken by a spirit of compromise which is no longer the statesmanlike desire to preserve unity between slightly varying parts, but has become a blind attempt to find something in common between highly differing and even antagonistic interests. For compromise—which, used as a side-method, is a condition of polit-

> ical success—becomes, when it is raised to the dignity of a main principle, the immediate cause of disintegration and failure.[22]

The Liberal party has not flirted with socialism too little, but rather too much, according to these representatives of its youth. We read in the article "Liberalism and Wealth":

> The untrue progressive is an opportunist who trims his sails to every passing breeze. He wants to play the middleman between Liberalism and Collectivism; and he will succeed for a time until some strong man comes forward with one or perhaps two ideas, and with a scheme sufficiently clear and sufficiently workable to arouse enthusiastic support and opposition. Then he will be forgotten.[23]

And in the final article, "The Historical Basis of Liberalism", we read:

> The Liberal party has been beaten because it has attempted to meet the Collectivist on his own ground—because it has tried to compete with him in materialist programmes and promises of increased comfort. It must return to its earlier, better ideal … with Socialism there can be no capitulation, no compromise.[24]

So a return to the Manchester School, to purely political radicalism, to administrative nihilism?

That is not what the contrast looks like in the view of our six friends. For them, liberalism is not identical with the theory of the nightwatchman state, and socialism is not already the enemy because it demands state interventions in economic activity.

It says in the article "Liberals and Labour":

> On this claim of "Socialism" to regard as so many applications of "its principles" every interference of Parliament with the conditions of labour, there is much that might be said.

And further:

> The word "Socialism" is itself fast losing all claim to be an instrument of value in political investigation; it is meeting the fate which awaits most popular abstractions—the more familiar it becomes as a phrase, the less definite it grows as an idea. It is true, no doubt, that in the sphere of Labour

> legislation there is a large field where State interference is approved alike by the scientific Socialist and by the Liberal who retains to the full a belief in the old principles of his party. But this coincidence is no more than a casual agreement, and it is entirely gratuitous to assume that reforms which both schools of theorists are agreed to welcome can be justified only from the Socialistic point of view. To the Socialist (who appears hardly to recognise any qualitative difference between the municipalisation of a natural monopoly and of an ordinary competitive trade) every regulation controlling the conditions under which the artisan competes for his wage is a step towards the abolition of competition; to the Liberal, on the contrary, it is a step towards the adjustment of surroundings without which competition is but a mockery. …
>
> The proper regulation of industry by law is only an extension of the principle of collective bargaining: just as a trades-union may maintain a minimum rate of wages by associating all its members in one combined demand, so the law of the land may lay down an inferior limit for conditions of employment, in the name of a whole class of workers, which every separate unit is anxious to secure, but which cannot be established at all without being guaranteed to everyone alike. Liberal principle is not sacrificed by the adoption of enactments which add the emphasis of law to the reasonable demands of the weaker citizens in their dealings with the stronger. State interference in such cases does not limit the reality of free choice; it confirms the workman's claim to be heard in the striking of a bargain where he would otherwise negotiate at an unjust advantage. From this point of view law is expressive, not impressive: it records, in a form that cannot be disregarded, certain of the stipulations of a contracting party in the industrial compact, but it does not at all attempt to import into the bargain conditions which limit freedom of choice in directions in which it can be reasonably exercised. While retaining his hold on the idea of individuality, as secure from external restraints, the Liberal admits the interaction of character and environment, and does not hesitate to give up some psychological shadow of freedom for its material reality.[25]

Here perhaps the question can be raised of where, with such argumentation, the author's hostility to compromise has got to, whether namely in that passage at the end there socialism has not already been reached a little finger, which must unfailingly pull the entire body after it. The author, Mr Allsebrook Simon answers this:

> The Socialist, who mistakes identity of treatment for identity of diagnosis, may find it difficult to understand why a principle which promotes the

> stringent inspection of all workshops will not countenance the public ownership and management of all workshops; to him these two proposals are two parallel applications of a single idea, and he convicts the Liberal who discriminates between them of a want of courage to carry out to a logical end the principle underlying the Factory Acts. Such a condemnation entirely misses the spirit of industrial legislation, as it is understood by Liberals …
>
> Now, the Liberal attitude to working men's questions is determined, as has already been said, by a reference to two main ideas—to the idea of freedom as secured by the absence of legal restraint upon one's own private choice, and to the idea of freedom as secured by the imposition of legal restraint upon others, or rather upon the community at large, in one's own private interest. In so far as a truly wise policy lies intermediate between these two extremes, we may call the Liberal attitude one of compromise, and we may admit that every case for State interference must be decided on its individual merits. But this is not to say that the Liberal must roam at large between these two fixed boundaries without any materials for guidance better than the exigencies of the moment. His object is not merely to pick the path of least resistance between the impassable heights of Individualism on the one hand, and the treacherous quagmires of Socialism on the other. …
>
> Even the details of a sound programme must have a strictly theoretic justification; and it is only by retaining a grasp on the theory that the practice of politics can be elevated from the meanest of trades to the noblest of public activities. …
>
> A true Liberal still holds "that Parliament ought not to legislate on matters on which the people are, or reasonably ought to be, able to protect themselves. It ought not to enact what people shall do or shall not do in respect to self-regarding matters on which the people can fairly decide for themselves. In respect to social reforms and domestic concerns, the duty of Parliament is to interfere as little as possible, and only for the purpose of protecting health, life, or property, and preventing acts which are in the nature of crimes. Parliament should do nothing to lessen that spirit of self-reliance which makes society progressive wherever it prevails."[26]

Those are wise words, but they are often applied ambiguously, falsely appealed to by unscrupulous business-owners to defend selfishly defying the duties of capital and the burdens of work. Correctly interpreted and honestly applied, however, they "are still potent to inspire and to justify a great industrial charter".[27] In its outlines, the path of the heirs of the liberal tradition can be sketched out in advance as follows:

> Recognising the danger of serious inequalities in the distribution of wealth, they will boldly discriminate between the taxable abundance of the rich and the irreducible minimum of the poor; but they will not check the stimulus to thrift by penalising the legitimate success which its exercise has achieved. Holding that environment and character are closely intertwined, they will invoke the aid of law to secure better conditions for industry; but they will not imagine that factory inspection can make the unemployable efficient, or shorter hours make the idle industrious. Admitting the inability of a wage-earner to maintain unassisted his just claims in his dealings with a wealthy paymaster, they will bring the influence of the community to the aid of the weaker party; but they will not purchase complete independence from the control of individuals at the price of complete dependence on the dictation of the State. Believing that all free men should be equal in the control of their own lives no less than in the eye of the law, they will promote opportunities for individual choice by statutory restrictions upon the forces that oppose it; but they will refuse to regard as their ideal a society where all will be equally free because all will be equally enslaved.[28]

This much from the "centre-right" of our young liberals regarding the workers' question. Their stance towards other questions of economic policy is indicated by this as well. Thus they are naturally no enemies of state and municipal enterprise. The state shall "recognise the importance of discouraging or abolishing artificial and of controlling or owning natural monopolies.".[29] Likewise, it is appropriate for the municipality itself to take in hand the natural and necessary monopolies that lie within its sphere. But here too a distinction must be made, and

> the unnecessary intellectual coldness exhibited in some quarters towards the legitimate extension of municipal enterprise has proved as disastrous as the hot-headed emotionalism which welcomes every proposed extension of public industry and officialdom, local or Imperial, as necessarily a step in the right direction.[30]

Even the communalisation of natural monopolies is not always appropriate. In villages and smaller towns, the number of those who are willing and capable of taking on this administrative activity is often very limited, and where these are fully preoccupied, it would be foolish to add for instance the manufacture of gas to the other functions of administration as well.

> In such a case the local authority will get far better terms for the consumers by prudent leasing and by vigilant control than by substituting public mismanagement for private monopoly.[31]

From the same essay from which these latter explications are taken, we can also add a few remarks about the graduated increasing income tax. The author, Mr Francis W. Hirst, sees in this tax, with its tendency to work against the massive increase of private wealth "an encouragement rather than a menace to private property".[32] But here too there is a limit.

> This limit admits of statement in general form, and may be said to be reached whenever the scale becomes steep enough to suggest to reasonable and impartial men that further graduation might either decrease the national wealth and well-being by driving capital from the country, or might, to the public detriment, create a corrupt desire among the poorer part of the electorate for an increase of the public expenditure. Than the latter contingency nothing could be more loathsome. Can it be imagined that any responsible politician will ever condescend to provide the employed, the unemployed or the unemployable with an interest in public extravagance? The two attitudes represent the gulf that separates a Hooley from a Bright, or a Keir Hardie from an Adam Smith.[33]

One can see now what the substantive aspects are that make our six fellows into such decided enemies of socialism. These are not new, and also should not count as new to us, and if one wants to, one can dismiss them out of hand as bourgeois prejudices, and detect lurking behind them the fear of the bourgeois or the bourgeois' son about their property and its privileges. That would be a convenient but hardly a fruitful critique. It would also barely fit with how things stand in England. Precisely because here political and economic development is so advanced, the opposition between proletarian and bourgeois rights concepts, etc., is not such a simple matter as one often imagines it. The socialist too, as soon as they make practical suggestions, just like the bourgeois, has to deal with society as a whole, and cannot ignore the rights and moral concepts appropriate to its composition. However great an enemy of private property they may like to be in theory, as soon as they step outside the heady sphere of utopianism or of revolutionary declamation, they will show their reverence towards it in practice and still respect it when they set about pulling out its claws and teeth through inhibiting laws or by means of coalitions. The worker and the socialist is to this extent not essentially different from the

bourgeois reformer at all. From their side as well, there is no talk today of any serious threat to property *simpliciter*. And in England they are inured to mere declamations.

Let us hear the authors once again. What they accuse socialism of above all, in the form in which it confronts them in the struggles of English Social Democracy, is not false economy as such, but that it does not care about the aftereffects of its proposals on the moral character of the population. A minority of thoughtful socialists does seem to be conscious of the danger that lies in dedicating to the machinery of life a devoted attention that they deny to its spirit.

> Meanwhile the mass of Socialistic opinion in this country is absolutely ignorant of the fact that any such danger is inherent in their schemes, and Mr. Keir Hardie cheerfully proclaims a policy of universal nationalisation without being troubled with any misgivings as to the effects of the abolition of competition upon the inner life of the workers. …
>
> It is in their appreciation of this "ethical" aspect of social problems and remedies that true Liberals and ordinary Socialists stand absolutely opposed. To the former, civic individuality is so important a factor in well-being that the interference of the State is only tolerable where it promotes real freedom of choice by substituting legal restriction for the harsher tyranny of unequal circumstance; to the latter, the free play of private wills is to be swamped in a Utopia where all forms of competition are in themselves an evil, and a complete system of State regulation is elevated to the position of an absolute good.[34]

Whether this has really been proposed by English socialists as the goal of their efforts we do not want to explore further here; in any case, it is not right to say that socialists do not care about the effects of the societal transformation they aspire to on the character of human beings. Instead, one could rather call into doubt the correctness of the conclusions that are drawn in this respect now and again. But that is a speculative question that is not at issue here. What is more important is the question of the effect of practical proposals, designed for *immediate* realisation, on their characters, and this is also decisively emphasised at a different point in the book. If they place great weight on this point, then one cannot quite disagree with the authors. For our part, it has in fact often been taken very much more lightly than is justified. But in a country where socialism is nothing, insofar as it does not express itself through its own practical proposals, this must be doubly conspicuous and repellent. For its own sake as much as

also out of propagandistic concerns, this question is of the greatest importance for Social Democracy.

What the authors propose on points that are not directly connected with socialism, specifically in which they barely diverge from the socialists, can remain undiscussed here. The chapter about the stance of the liberals towards foreign questions reveals its author as a decided democrat and opponent of all jingoistic politics of annexation—although this does not prevent him from standing up for general military service, whose moral advantages in his view outweigh all economic disadvantages. Naturally, in this he is not thinking of aping German militarism, which he comments on very dismissively, just as, like many English democrats, he has a very unfavourable—if truth be told, *excessively* unfavourable—opinion about the situation in Germany. The English draw conclusions about the general state of affairs from the well-known events that the *Telegraph* reports to them, and in light of this the perception that Germany is as yet only semi-civilised is easy enough to explain, even if it is false.

In general, as has also been acknowledged on the pro-socialist side, the book is characterised by an idealistic streak. One can see in the essays that they are written by people who defend their cause with enthusiasm. As a socialist, one can regret that this enthusiasm is for an opposing party, but one will not for that reason respect it any the less. It is curious enough that precisely at this moment it is oriented towards the Liberal party. This party has not been in as woeful a state as it is at the present moment for a long time. In Parliament, it is a *quantité négligeable*, which its opponents only pay heed to in order to maintain Parliamentary rules. It is without a main leader, and internally divided into all manner of tiny factions; it gives in every respect the impression of a decaying party. Here, if anywhere, Social Democracy should have an easy ride. And now this book announces the opposite, at least from the greatest university in the country. Might it be right, might the picture above be deceptive, and might a new springtime bloom for the Liberal party in the country? A swallow does not yet make a summer, but all the same this young liberal sextet is a remarkable sign of the times.

Notes

1. *Forecasts of the Coming Century, by a decade of writers* (Manchester: The Labour Press, 1897).

2. Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), English philosopher, anthologist, and socialist activist, early supporter of gay rights and animal rights. Tom Mann (1856–1941), English trade unionist, communist, Labour politician, and public speaker, after 1884 member of the Social Democratic Federation, prominent advocate for the eight-hour day. Margaret McMillan (1860–1931), Christian socialist and educationalist, member of the gradualist Fabian Society and SDF, and after 1902 ally of Keir Hardie and George Lansbury in the Labour Party. William Morris (1834–1896), English poet, novelist, translator of Icelandic sagas, textile designer, and socialist activist, associated with the Arts and Crafts and Pre-Raphaelite movements, member of the SDF and Socialist League (1884–1890) until its anarchist turn. Henry Shakespear Stephens Salt (1851–1939), English writer, classicist, naturalist, and campaigner for prison and school reform, animal rights activist, and centre of late-Victorian circles of socialists, Fabians, and labour organisers. George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), Irish author and playwright, socialist activist and polemicist, leading Fabian pamphleteer. Hyman Russell Smart (1858–1923), English sanitation engineer and socialist activist, member of the SDF, Fabians, Independent Labour Party (1895–1911), and British Socialist Party (1911–1912). Enid Stacy (1868–1903), English Christian socialist, feminist, and trade unionist organiser, Fabian lecturer, and rival of Keir Hardie in the Independent Labour Party. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), Welsh naturalist, geographer, biologist, and anthropologist, independently conceived of a theory of evolution by natural selection simultaneously to Charles Darwin, socialist activist on behalf of land reform and women's suffrage, vocal opponent of free trade, eugenics, and militarism.
3. Friedrich Schiller, *The Death of Wallenstein*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (tr.) (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1800 [1799]), Act II scene 2.
4. *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, p. 48.
5. Ibid., p. 50.
6. [Ed. B.—For this reason it was also entirely wrong when recently a socialist paper branded the French deputy Millerand a petty-bourgeois socialist because he had spoken out against forcible confiscation of property. Herr Millerand may be a petty-bourgeois in other respects, but this statement does not make him one. Not *that* property is recognised defines a stage of society, but *what kind of* property, and which rights are associated with property. The protection of recognised property is one of the conditions of ordered societal life and regulated production conditions. The opposite is not socialism, but anarchism, which does not become any better by nominally accepting the state.]
7. *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, p. 40.
8. Ibid., p. 34.

9. Ibid., p. 35.
10. Ibid., p. 33.
11. Ibid., p. 35.
12. Ibid., p. 30.
13. Ibid., p. 15.
14. Ibid., p. 101.
15. George Bernard Shaw, 'Die Illusionen des Sozialismus', *Zeit* 108 (24 October 1896), pp. 55–7, 109 (31 October 1896), pp. 71–3.
16. *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, p. 141.
17. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Prologue".
18. *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, pp. 171–3.
19. *Essays in Liberalism, by Six Oxford Men* (London: Cassell and Company, 1897), p. vii.
20. Ibid., p. viii. Joseph Hilaire Pierre René Belloc (1870–1953), British-French poet and writer, historian, soldier, and Liberal politician.
21. Ibid., p. x.
22. Ibid., p. 2.
23. Ibid., p. 54.
24. Ibid., pp. 272–3.
25. Ibid., pp. 111–14.
26. [Ed. B.—from Charles Bradlaugh: *Labour and Law*, p. 31.] *Essays in Liberalism*, pp. 117–19. John Allsebrook Simon (1873–1954), British Liberal politician, served as Home Secretary (1915–1916, 1935–1937), Foreign Secretary (1931–1935), and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1937–1940), strong supporter of David Lloyd George's welfarist reforms.
27. *Essays in Liberalism*, p. 125.
28. Ibid., pp. 125–6.
29. Ibid., p. 86.
30. Ibid., p. 84.
31. Ibid., p. 85.
32. Ibid., p. 88. Francis Wrigley Hirst (1873–1953), British author and publicist, Liberal political activist, and editor of the *Economist* (1907–1916).
33. [Ed. B.—As is visible from a preceding passage, the author here has in mind Keir Hardie's statements to the Parliamentary committee on the question of the unemployed. Mr. Hooley is a well-known stock market speculator, who has made himself a millionaire in a short time through skilful investment in company flotations, and now seeks to play a Parliamentary role. For this purpose he is "cultivating" a constituency that is currently represented by a Liberal, and has bought up the previously liberal London evening paper *The Sun*, owned by the nationalist T. P. O'Connor, and has it edited with a conservative line. He plays the

part of the conservative social reformer, and has as such concocted a project whereby the workers should approve a corn tariff and in return receive a state old-age pension. To this project "of imposing a heavy and destructive tax on the working poor, allegedly for the purpose of supporting the aged poor, but in fact in order to enrich the landowners" refers the contrast above between Hooley and John Bright, the well-known anti-Corn Law agitator.

Disconcertingly, Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader* prominently brought out an article some time ago, in which all manner of flattering things were said to Herr Hooley about his future achievements.] *Essays in Liberalism*, p. 89.

John Bright (1811–1889), British Radical and Liberal politician and Quaker, partner with Richard Cobden in campaigning to abolish the Corn Laws (1815–1846), advocate of free trade and electoral reform, opponent of militarism and Irish Home Rule. James Keir Hardie (1856–1915), Scottish trade unionist, mineworkers' organiser, and socialist activist, founder and first parliamentary leader (1906–1908) of the Labour Party, campaigner for women's suffrage, Indian self-rule, and against WW1. Ernest Terah Hooley (1859–1947), English financial speculator and fraudster, unsuccessfully sought a political career for the Conservative Party. Thomas Power O'Connor (1848–1929), Irish journalist and nationalist political activist, long-serving MP (1880–1929), founder and editor of newspapers including the *Star* (1887–1891) and *Sun* (1893–1902).

34. [Ed. B.—A. Simon in "Liberals and Labour".] *Essays in Liberalism*, pp. 116–17.

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CHAPTER 23

Idealism, the Theory of Struggle, and Science

Sozialistische Monatshefte 7(8) (August 1901), pp. 597–608.

When Ferdinand Lassalle called on the German workers to fight for the general franchise in 1863, he met with resistance not only among the ruling parties. Many people too on whose participation he had counted, socialists and radical democrats, either remained entirely on the sidelines or satisfied themselves with lukewarm declarations of sympathy. Either because they, like Rodbertus, mistrusted the general franchise given the people's level of development at the time, or because in the face of the political situation in Germany or at least in Prussia, they considered agitation for the general franchise to be untimely. Marx too shared this latter view, and as late as 1868 in his letter to J. B. von Schweitzer he described raising the Chartist cry for the general franchise to be a great mistake on Lassalle's part. He writes:

> He overlooked the difference between conditions in Germany and England. He overlooked the lessons of the *bas-empire,* with regard to universal suffrage in France.[1]

And it also cannot be disputed that the facts available from France hardly sounded very encouraging, even if today we must also add that they were imbued with an exaggerated significance at the time. Experience has far rather proved Lassalle right, who incidentally, as his work about the Italian War shows, had followed the franchise movement in France very attentively.[2] Since then, it has been shown what great creative force is embodied

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in the general franchise. To make this clear to us in its full scope, we only need to consider where the socialist workers' movement would in all probability be today if Bismarck, instead of experimenting with the general franchise, had prescribed a limited franchise for the North German Confederation in 1866.

It is quite certain that we would have a workers' movement in Germany today even then. That would have been ensured by the economic development and the great industrial transformation that has taken place in Germany since the 1860s. We would have all manner of workers' economic associations, and we would also have workers' political societies. But if we remind ourselves of the history of the workers' movement in those countries that do not have the general franchise, then we will also have to say that these workers' political societies would also not have far off the strength that Social Democracy enjoys today. At times, when the political constellation was favourable to resuming agitation in support of the general franchise, they would have experienced a greater or lesser upswing, only to die down again once the effort proved to be fruitless. England until well into the 1880s and Belgium until the start of the 1890s are examples for this. With all due respect to the idealism and the intelligence of the German workers, even idealism needs the nourishment of success to remain a vital effective force, and intelligence needs a practical field of activity to have a lasting organisational effect. We have examples for this too, and indeed from all countries. Where the franchise or the possibility of using it is missing, there the political workers' movement is again and again forced back onto the standpoint of the sect: in the cited letter, Marx accuses Lassalle *inter alia* of having given the workers' movement that he was leading a sect-like character. But insofar as that was the case, it was rooted far less in Lassalle's way of thinking and temperament than in the conditions under which he was operating. Where these are favourable for sectarianism, they turn human beings into sectarians against their will. Discussions that otherwise have a stimulating and fructifying effect, or at least pass without disadvantage for the movement, then have a wearing and disintegrating effect. People become divided about dotting i's and crossing t's, and their energies are diverted towards internal struggle as soon as the opportunity for outward struggle is absent. But thereby the party loses electoral force, and its leaders lose respect among the great mass.

A Bebel and a Liebknecht did not need a parliament to bear witness to their aptitude and acquire an esteemed reputation. But these men only achieved world renown because of their activity in the popular assembly.

And now one should not forget that it was the lot of German Social Democracy to first demonstrate the practical value of the general franchise to the socialists and workers of other countries. While it was making the first attempts with it, the franchise was discredited in France: the 2 million opposition votes mentioned above were cast for bourgeois candidates, while the socialist voters abstained, and when later at a by-election in Paris they went ahead with an independent candidates (the worker Tolain), he remained in the minority with barely 500 votes.[3] The elections of 1871 brought some socialists into the Chamber, but the question of continuing the war and then the Commune uprising divided them, and after the defeat of the Commune the representation of Social Democracy in the French Chamber was over for more than a decade. With the exception of the war year of 1871 and the first vote under the Anti-Socialist Law, only German Social Democracy could show a steady use of the general franchise, evidenced by continual growth. The socialists in other countries rejoiced in its successes, from them they drew ever renewed courage to remain under their chosen banner, and were spurred on to constantly-renewed action to gain the franchise. One must at least find it doubtful whether the Belgians and the Austrians would have unfolded the staggering energy to win the general franchise that won them such fine results in the mid-1890s, if they had not had in mind the pathbreaking successes and accomplishments of German Social Democracy. In France, they helped reawaken the workers' movement to overcome revolutionary doctrinairism, and in England they gave the impetus to found an independent socialist party. Germany fructified the entire international workers' movement. If today Social Democracy is a power that suffuses the entire public life of Europe with its spirit, so that even its greatest adversaries are forced to pay tribute to it to an ever stronger degree, if it exerts increasing attraction on the more active minds in all professional spheres, if it was able to give new meaning to values and impose its point of view on literature in various respects, if it compels legislators to bring into existence institutions that secure new starting-points for the working class in the struggle for economic self-assertion, then this is to a high degree the effect of the fact that it is a unified political partisan movement, which is constantly spreading, and that it has learnt to win and wield the weapon of the franchise.

It is my firm conviction that what I have said here is in no way exaggerated, but one can even take a good piece of it away and what will be left

over is still the uncommonly strong fructifying effect of the general franchise.

But what does this fact have to do with the object to which, according to the title, this article is dedicated?

Before I go on to outline this, I must make some prefatory remarks about the purpose of the present article.

It is about a defence of the address *How is Scientific Socialism Possible?*, which I held on 17 May this year before the Social-Scientific Students' Association [*Sozialwissenschaftlicher Studentenverein*] in Berlin, and which has since appeared in print, against unjustified attacks.[4] I will remark here parenthetically that I do not reject as unjustified everything that has been said in criticism of this address. I readily admit, even if with regret, for instance, that it shows great deficiencies in construction and breaks off its line of argument too early. That is partly the consequence of the circumstances under which the address was held, specifically the fact that the character of the auditorium was different than what I had assumed when the address was arranged. Yet, as prepared as I am to admit formal deficiencies in the address, I cannot accept that it rests on a factually unsound foundation, that its conclusions, the thesis that it amounts to—namely that socialism as a theory can never be a science—can be challenged on good grounds.

The only reproach that has been made of me in this respect that I believe is worth discussing is the objection that I am misconstruing the concept of science—which has been raised the most acutely by a reviewer in *Vorwärts*, comrade 'Ke.'.[5] It is self-evident that, depending on how someone conceives of this concept, they will also regard certain theories as exhaustively or incompletely covered by it. If one can prove my definition of scientificity to be wrong, then with that what I say about the limited scientific nature of socialism would also fall, or in any case would need to be appropriately modified.

Already in the debate that followed the address, Professor Adolph Wagner remarked that my argument fundamentally only came down to a semantic dispute over the concept of science. The *Vorwärts* reviewer now believed that he could describe this as "too favourable, too benevolent, or even only too polite an interpretation". In response, I pointed out that in the same breath with which Wagner expressed that, he also claimed Rodbertus as a representative of scientific socialism. It is well known what

fundamental differences exist between Marx's and Rodbertus' theories. With reference to this, I continued that, if Wagner's conception of scientificity was supposed to apply, we would get to two scientific socialisms that excluded one another on significant points, and that was a logical impossibility. But if not, then presenting Wagner as a still "too polite" crown witness against me is inadmissible.

In his reply, comrade Ke. then also dropped Wagner. As a modest man, I should be satisfied with that. But I am so immodest that I do not regard the matter as settled with that. Comrade Ke. must instead allow me to turn the skewer back on him and summon Wagner as a crown witness against him. Of course, in my answer in *Vorwärts*, I alleged that Ke. and Wagner conceive of science in different ways. But I did so only to simplify the debate there as far as possible. In fact, this difference does not need to exist, and Wagner can, without having to deny himself, safely accept Ke.'s criterion of scientificity. Wagner reclaimed Rodbertus as a representative of scientific socialism. But what if the definition that Ke. gives of the scientificity of socialism—according to which science is "*the production of general lawfulness in nature and society, arranged into a unified system and methodically created*", and scientific socialism is the construction of socialism "on the unified lawfulness of societal will", which is *conscious* of the necessary condition and *the only conceivable path for human development*, which is clear about the *cause*, the *goal*, and also about the expedient and inevitable technique of *achieving* it—what if this definition in fact does apply to Rodbertus? If it even applies far more accurately to Rodbertus than to Marx? If, even further, it could be used for Rodbertus with greater justification than in relation to Marx?

I do not hesitate to state that this is my conviction. And I will try to furnish the proof for its correctness as briefly as possible.

Rodbertus' socialism is a thoroughly closed, rounded-off system. It has as its theoretical foundation the idea that, as Rodbertus once expresses it, "the course of history consists in nothing but the generalisation of communism".[6]

Rodbertus says:

> In all great world-historical movements, the deepest and most significant question has always been how far *communism* can be generalised.

He continues:

> But the degree of generalisation is conditional, conditioned by the degree of effectiveness of the division of labour, the inner strength of the ethical order, and the level and extent of agreement of popular consciousness.[7]

This theory of history, which incidentally in its core aligns with the theory developed by Lassalle in his *System of Acquired Rights*, that the "cultural-historical course of all history of right in general consists in ever more restricting the ownership sphere of private property, and placing ever more objects outside private property", recognises, as one sees from the last of the statements cited here, the determinant force of the three fundamental factors of societal existence: productive development, the state of ethics, and the state of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] for the degree of realising communism. With that, it identifies itself as fundamentally evolutionist, in contrast to a utopian conception that misrecognises the lawfulness of these relationships. It is incomplete, because it gives little more than mere indications about the reciprocal relations between these factors and the subjective driving forces of development, but it is kept thoroughly unified, free of inconsistent content. In principle, it rules out arbitrariness, that is, developments that lie outside the lawfulness of these relations. Rodbertus' well-known reform proposal of introducing a state-determined normal wage that is relative to the productive capacity of labour, does not contradict this. As wrong as it is in some of its preconditions, in its idea it is still placed by Rodbertus in an organic relationship vis-à-vis the state of development of productive conditions. It is deficient in its factual preconditions, but it does not contravene the principle of development he has posited, which self-evidently permits conscious regulative interventions in economic life.[8] How strongly Rodbertus sticks to the principle of ruling out everything that, from his perspective, must place itself in the way of the development towards communism, and which must have an inimical effect on development, is shown by his rejection—which has been justified by history—of producer cooperatives and such measures, which, like profit sharing [*Gewinnbeteiligung*], are liable to generate particularistic tendencies among the workers. His idea of the plant working day [*Werkarbeitstag*]—as became clear to me during my work on more recent wage systems, which I intend to publish imminently—is being realised ever more strongly precisely in recent times, albeit in a different way than he assumed, but still in substance. In short, we find in Rodbertus "the production of general

lawfulness in nature and society, arranged into a unified system and methodically created", and we find precisely in his socialism the foundation of a "unified lawfulness of societal will, which is *conscious* of the necessary condition and *the only conceivable path for human development*, which is clear about the *cause*, the *goal*, and also about the expedient and inevitable technique of *achieving* it". The phrase with which Ke. describes his opposition to what he calls my "in a critical sense unscientific empiricism" applies precisely to Rodbertus: "scientifically the movement is nothing, scientifically the goal is everything".

Can one say the same about Marx? That is at least doubtful, since it would contradict the fundamental proposition of Marx's historical materialism. As strongly as the goal influenced Marx's volition [*Wollen*], for the *theory* with him—and this precisely justifies in my opinion his superiority over Rodbertus—the *focus* lies *on the movement*. I insist on that unconditionally; on this point I am still today more a Marxist than anything else, and precisely with regard to this I welcomed it when some time ago a man who does not exactly belong to the least within our party declared me to be a more consistent Marxist than all of my detractors. In my opinion, the movement, as I characterised it at the time in my article about the theory of breakdown, carries the goal within itself, its reality rests within it, it is outside it—scientifically nothing.[9] I acknowledge the practical value of the goals we set for ourselves, and I self-evidently admit that such goals require a scientific foundation, rest on scientific enquiry into the conditions and tendencies of societal development, and must lie in harmony with the recognised rules of this development, in order to be able to prove themselves to be directive [*richtunggebend*]. But what I cannot admit is that such goals, through fulfilling these conditions, become integral parts of the science that is at issue here: social science.

The domain of determination [*Bestimmungsgebiet*] of the sciences is, depending on their object, very varied in kind. For that reason, unified formulas, which we establish for the concept of science, and as Ke. outlines them in the first of the passages cited above, can also only claim to have scope for the formal element, but not equally for the material or substantial elements of the various domains of knowledge. "Science", says Ke., "is the production of general lawfulness in nature and society." But he will admit that lawfulness in nature is fundamentally different from the lawfulnesses of societal life. About the former, whose object we have not made, we can speak with much greater certainty than about the latter,

whose object—society—is the product of our intervention. Ke. believes he can hold up against me the statement:

> To deny the pure scientific character of socialism because it also grows from out of will, means nothing other than to deny the scientific character of mathematics, because it is merely a product of fact-free [*tatsachlos*] thinking.

In the first instance, I must dispute that mathematics is the product of fact-free thinking, although I self-evidently admit that new mathematical propositions of compelling validity come into being through thinking without the foundation of new facts. Mathematics has to deal precisely with pure forms, quantities, and relations of force, which allow themselves to be developed further merely by the aid of logic. For it, the contents of forms, the substances of quantities, and the objects of relative forces are irrelevant. It is deductive, whereas social science in a narrower sense today must be substantially of an inductive-empirical character, if one is to be able to describe it as a *science* at all.

But can something that we *will* [*wollen*] ever be a pure science? What already is or what stands beyond all doubt, I do not need to will, I can have the good sense not to will at all, since I would thereby imply that it is not the case or that it is doubtful. I cannot will that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares of the two shorter sides. I cannot will that the Roman world empire perished because of the disparity between its size and its internal composition. Further, I cannot will that on 8 April 1902 there shall be a partial solar eclipse, after the astronomers have calculated that it is going to take place. But I can will that exploitation, oppression, and need disappear from the Earth and that collectivism reigns. I can will it because it is not the case, and because there is no unconditional certainty that it will be. But because this certainty is not provable, the theory that postulates it is also no pure science, even if it can scientifically prove its desirability, its possibility, and its probability. Where our will plays into a theory, it ceases to be a pure science.

But with that, science is in no way restricted to raw empiricism. Outside of experience there is, for me, certainly no science, but to experience also belong the derived laws and rules of natural and intellectual phenomena. In my address I therefore speak expressly of the quality [*Beschaffenheit*] and the *relations* of things, to which after all also belongs, *inter alia*, their *causal relationship*; and on page 35 I talk about the "science of the *forces* and the *connections* [*Zusammenhänge*] of the *societal organism*, about

cause and effect in societal life".[10] Further, on page 22 I repudiated that narrow-minded positivism that rejects *sketching out in advance* probable future development.[11] But in the face of the great complexity of human society, and in particular modern society, in the face of the extraordinary diversity of the forces that cut across one another, I postulate in principle a demarcation between the domains of science and conjecture, between knowledge and tendency, in particular volition [*Wollen*], between immanent and teleological necessities—all points regarding which our literature is lousy with confused mistakes.

> Too often it is true, that all our contemporaneous socialism still contains within itself some latent germs of a *new utopianism*.
>
> This is the case with those who continuously harp on the dogma of the necessity of evolution, which they confound with a certain right to a better condition. And they say that the future society of collectivist economic production, with all its technical and pedagogic consequences, *will come because it should come*. They seem to forget that this future society must be produced by human beings themselves in response to the demands of the conditions in which they now live and by the development of their own aptitudes. Blessed are those who measure the future of history and the right to progress with the yardstick of a life insurance policy!
>
> Those dogmatists of cheap ideas forget several things. In the first place, they forget that the future, just because it is a future which will be a present when we are of the past, cannot be used as a practical criterion for our present actions. It will be the thing at which we wish to arrive, but not the way by which to reach it. In the second place, the experience of these last fifty years should convince those, who can think critically, of the following truth: To the extent that the capacity for organization in a class party will grow among proletarians and small tradespeople, the process of this complicated movement will itself furnish the proof that the development of the new era will have to be measured by a standard of time considerably slower than that first assumed by the early socialists who were still tainted with Jacobine memories. It is evident that we cannot look forward across such long stretches of time with very great certitude. We must take into account the enormous complexity of modern life and the vast expansion of capitalism, or of bourgeois society.[12]

So the Italian socialist *Antonia Labriola* in the third part of his treatise about historical materialism, *Socialism and Philosophy*.[13] Maybe people will believe this man, who in the meantime is also revered in Germany, if they will not believe me.

It seems very doubtful to me whether it is truly spoken in the vein of Kantianism when Ke. says about what I describe as utopianism in the better sense, as speculative idealism, that it is the strictest science for critical philosophy [*Kritizismus*]: the rational discovery of a necessary, unavoidable goal, towards which all directive volition must be steered. If collectivism were merely a matter of an ethical principle, or if collectivism were exhausted by ethics, then I could probably agree with him, albeit changing the word *strictest* to *highest*. But this is not in fact the case, and precisely not the case in socialism as Marxist theory formulates it. There ethics is far rather presented as a juxtaposition, a consequence, not as the deciding principle of collectivism. And rightly so, since collectivism never lets itself be justified from ethics alone. Ethics as a pure science remains at the formal level, it formulates fundamental principles that are supposed to have general validity and therefore remain untouched by their temporal content. In one of my essays, I once drew attention to the fact that in our entire socialist literature, which after all at every moment talks about exploitation, not a single time the attempt is made to give this concept a precise definition. In this address, I define it as ethically reprehensible predatory usage [*sittlich verwerfliche Ausnutzung*] of one human by another. But that is only so far a somewhat more precise determination of the concept, which in a concrete case does not yet give any information about whether a certain usage is exploitation or not. Engels, meanwhile, gives us something to go on when he says that, as soon as the mass declares an economic fact—I would prefer to say: an economic relation—to be unjust, this is proof that it has become historically outdated as a result of the appearance of other economic facts; but he also leaves the question precisely at that. Yet based on this statement, whose relative justification can hardly be challenged—the feeling of right of the masses is no infallible judge, but, where it persists, is at least a witness that is highly worth bearing in mind—the problem can be brought significantly closer to its solution. Ethics alone can pass no judgment about the ethical justification of an economic situation; for that, it needs the informative enquiry [*Auskunft*] of science about these economic relations. If the economy, the material foundation of social life, cannot live up to its task—attaining the highest possible well-being—without certain relations, so in our case without private business-owners and wage-labourers, then ethics cannot simply condemn these relations.

Now the proof that all business enterprise [*Unternehmerschaft*] has already become historically outdated is impossible to provide, nor has such

a claim ever been posited by any socialist of sound mind. For that reason, a socialist goal that assumes such a state of affairs also cannot be described as purely scientific, let alone as strictly scientific. Here we must grant the deciding word to history. But we can consider it scientifically established that business enterprise or, to use the popular term, capitalism, has become superfluous, even a hindrance to economic progress, in a whole series of economic enterprises, and that in others it is approaching this state to an increasing degree. In the face of this provable fact, we may still present collectivism as a scientifically-justified ideal—and other ideals are utopias in the objectionable sense of the word—and acknowledge the directive force of the rights-principle that lies at its basis. In the face of it, collectivism can even be described as the only justified economic ideal.

But because as an economic system it is an ideal, it cannot at the same time also be a science. Identifying an ideal with science can only be recognised for the formal sciences. Translated into social science, which underpins socialism, it would not be called Kantianism, but rather *Hegelianism*, in that it then would amount to the derivation of reality from the "idea". With that, Marxism would be inverted. But in my address, I was dealing with social economics.

Let us now come back to the formula on which Ke. rests his proof of the scientificity of socialism: cause—goal—achievement. He fills it out for Marxist socialism as follows: cause (causality of capitalism), goal (democratic socialism), achievement (class struggle). There is nothing to object to in this formula; as far as it goes, every socialist will presumably subscribe to it, and in any case I treat it as self-evident in my address. But how far does it go? That is the question on which the theoretical discussions in Social Democracy turn. Rodbertus would also have subscribed to this formula, since in the cited work, at the time of the worst reaction of the 1850s, he speaks of the "noteworthy schools and the *even noteworthier parties* of communism", with which the individualistic state "should very soon have to forge a compromise", and postulates democracy.[14] It is the way in which he fills this out further that is questionable, and specifically the further filling-out of the middle part: the achievement. And this leads us back to the discussion about the effects of the general franchise with which we opened this essay.

We have seen how sceptical not only Rodbertus but also Marx in his day were towards the general franchise. The same is true of Engels. As late as 1884, Engels argued that the only capacity that the general franchise had that was relevant for socialism was that it acts as the yardstick for the

maturity of the working class. “It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state.”[15] Engels convinced himself that it can be more after all, and admitted this unconditionally ten years later, on the eve of his death, in his Preface to the *Class Struggles*. Today we are now a bit further along still, and we can recognise ever more clearly the great social fruitfulness of the general franchise and other democratic institutions, a fruitfulness that stands in no principled contradiction to the fundamental ideas of Marxism, but rather on the contrary aligns with the oft-cited statement that force [*Gewalt*] is an economic potentiality [*Potenz*]. Not as the fruit of an immanent necessity within the economy, but as the consequence of the mightily-increased political influence of the working class are the privileges of business-owners curbed, and economic objects withdrawn from capitalist exploitation. Here we are as yet only at the beginning, but we can still recognise that to the extent that this development moves ahead, the economic structure of society must assume a different kind of form than the one which the schema of development that originally underpinned socialist theory foresaw. Whereas in practice this is fully taken into account, and for that reason, as I say in my address, “the workers’ movement [is] winning one position after another and ever more surely advancing towards certain goals it has set itself, formulating its demands ever more clearly”, the theory here lags behind—where it in fact should befit it to recognise these new tendencies and draw the further conclusions from them.[16] But where such an attempt is made, it is opposed by the prejudice that it has it in for the vital principles of the movement. And we have seen more than enough what means a narrow-minded orthodoxy seeks to use to inflame this prejudice.[17] Therefore it is of such great importance to clarify the relationship between socialism and science, and to challenge any exaggerated perceptions of their reciprocal dependency. We have seen what great potency lies within the general franchise, and we may express this openly, since in light of the strength that the workers’ movement has now attained, the alternative of the general franchise would not appeal to those who wield power today in any way. A lad with a whip can see off a bear that has not yet become aware of its strength; but once it has become aware of it, the strongest man cannot tame it. But could one have proved the potential of the general franchise scientifically in advance? Does the demand for the franchise require such a scientific proof where a modern class of wage-workers exists who have attained consciousness of their class situation?

Where such a working class exists and forms the great majority of the population in the country’s centres, the general franchise means the gradual subjection of state power [*Staatsgewalt*] to its will. But the public

power [*öffentliche Gewalt*], of which Marx says, precisely in this sense, that it is an economic potentiality, is only the expression of the willing elements [*Willenselemente*] that are the decisive factors in the state, and it is thoroughly in line with that Marxian expression to say: *The will is an economic potentiality.* However, the more highly society is organised, i.e., the more multifarious its composition and the more its members' sentiment becomes refined, the less the nature of the societal will—this diagonal of the various cross-cutting individual and group wills—allows itself to be determined scientifically in all points for future ages in advance.

Anyone who is confident that they are able to determine it scientifically in advance—I am willing to admit that they have the right to place socialism on a par with the "purely constitutive sciences" (Ke.). But if they cannot do so, and nevertheless claim the right to describe as "too polite" Wagner's remark that my investigation of the scientificity of socialism is merely a semantic dispute, then they must live with the fact that I reject this remark not only as not polite but also as untenable—politely, but decisively.

* * *

To close, some remarks may follow about the tendency of my address. That despite its deficiencies, which I have already mentioned, it could not remain hidden from the expert critic is shown by the discussions it has been subject to in a whole series of party papers, like the *Anhalter Volksblatt*, the *Breslauer Volkswacht*, the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, *inter alia*, and in several academic journals as well. I am seeking to determine in principle the border that exists for socialism between *science* and *will*, and thereby help *both science and will* go about things the right way. For any moving of the goalposts here means *violating* either science or the will, and does injustice to both of them. Socialism conceived as a pure science is a metaphysical notion, but not a realistic one; and the will that is not scientifically limited, not led by scientific insight is a deceptive companion that leads us into all manner of quagmires. If we give the will too great a right—and that is what we do when we subject science to our will in any kind of way, and for our will's sake treat it not critically as emergent knowledge, but dogmatically as complete knowledge—then we expose ourselves to the danger of being cheated by this good master. But if we give science greater rights than are due to it, then we accordingly neuter our will and make ourselves slaves to the belief in a necessity that does not in fact exist. Any error in delineating the border between them can also under certain circumstances become the cause of mistakes and omissions of all kinds.

Here I only need to recall the conclusions that we already drew for our practice from views about what had been "scientifically proven" in the question of wage determination [*Lohnbestimmung*], on the laws of development for agriculture, etc. An error in delineating this border has the further result that we become fixated on making the theoretical correctness of socialism dependent on the proof of its immanent necessity, which cannot be demonstrated scientifically, instead of deriving it realistically—and therein lies my socialist "Kantianism"—from the reason of socialist will, i.e., its *historical purposive necessity* [*Zwecknotwendigkeit*], arising from the *given conditions and developmental tendencies.*

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—*Neue Zeit*, 1896–1897, volume I, p. 8. The experiences that people had made with the general franchise under the Second French Empire were raised against Lassalle from the very beginning, *inter alia* also by Rodbertus. But whereas Lassalle made at least formal concessions to Rodbertus in relation to the productive associations, he was not to be moved to any acquiescence regarding the general franchise. Compare his letters to Rodbertus of 30 April and 8 May 1863.] Karl Marx, 'Marx to Johann Baptist von Schweitzer', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 43: Letters 1868–July 1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), p. 132.
2. [Ed. B.—Precisely the new elections for the legislative body undertaken in May 1863 resulted in a mighty advance for the opposition's votes: from 570,000 in 1857 its number grew to 1,950,000. In Paris and most of the larger cities, men of the opposition were elected.]
3. Henri Louis Tolain (1828–1897), French socialist and trade unionist, co-author of the *Manifesto of the Sixty* (1864), a programme that criticised the insufficiency of the egalitarian legacy of the 1789 French Revolution and demanded political, economic, and social democracy, later ostracised as an opportunist for his disavowal of the 1871 Paris Commune.
4. Present volume, pp. 343–76.
5. It is unclear who this 'Ke.', the reviewer in *Vorwärts*, originally was.
6. Karl Rodbertus, *Das Kapital: Vierter Sozialer Brief an von Kirchmann* (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1884), p. 94.
7. Ibid.
8. [Ed. B.—In *Capital*, which was written at the start of the 1850s, Rodbertus argues that "just as history since time immemorial has only advanced in compromises, so too only a compromise between labour and landed and capital property is the next task of our science" (social economics). It would be easy for him to develop the fundamental outlines of a political

economy without landed and capital property right down to the last detail, but it seemed harder and more useful to him to do preliminary scientific work on that compromise. He writes:

> Surely the social sciences only have a complete form once they describe not merely the recognisable goal, but also the *development towards it* in extensive and clear outlines, and surely in doing this latter part they are not turning their back on truth, but are precisely following its path. (p. 230)

The critique of Rodbertus that Engels offers in the prefaces to the *Poverty of Philosophy* and the second volume of *Capital* came out, in my opinion, more disparagingly under the influence of provocative attacks by the Rodbertians, and with a view to the exploitation of the Rodbertus cult for all manner of political ambiguities than it would have sounded in other circumstances, and was not without factual errors.]

9. [Ed. B.—"The general movement of society, that is, social progress, as well as the political and economic agitation and organisation to effect this progress." (*Zur Geschichte und Theorie des Sozialismus*, p. 234)]
10. Present volume, p. 362.
11. Ibid., p. 357ff.
12. Antonio Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, (tr.) Ernest Untermann (Chicago, IL: C. H. Kerr, 1907 [1897]), pp. 143–4.
13. [Ed. B.—Rome, 1898, E. Loescher & Co. At the cited point (p. 152) Labriola comments on the phrase "new utopianism" in a note: "Bernstein wrote recently with great ability some ingenious articles in the *Neue Zeit* on the utopianism latent in some Marxists. And many, whom the shoe fitted, may have asked themselves: 'Does that concern me?'"

    I am citing these extracts from Labriola because they give the reader the opportunity to judge whether I was justified in referring to Labriola in my address. The articles of which Labriola speaks were the essays published by me under the title "Problems of Socialism".

    I have expressly emphasised that there are differences of opinion between Labriola and myself. But they cannot change our agreement in principle that the name *scientific socialism* leads to false interpretations. In any case, Labriola must have had some kind of sensible reason why he stressed that other name—*critical communism*—as the "*only correct*" one.

    If one wants to believe K. Kautsky, then that would certainly not be the case. He seeks to trump that agreement by claiming that precisely Labriola has in the clearest and most convincing way proven the scientific character of Marxism in his work. Anyone who does not know Kautsky's methods might be baffled at his objection. Anyone who does know them and looks more closely will see that here, Kautsky has—one, two three!—swapped the nouns and says Marxism where it said socialism, or rather communism.] Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, p. 153.

14. Rodbertus, *Das Kapital*, p. 225.
15. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 26: Engels 1882–89* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p. 272.
16. Present volume, p. 351.
17. [Ed. B.—As I have already remarked in the previous number of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, K. Kautsky's article in issue 38 of *Neue Zeit*, which seemingly takes my address *ad absurdum*, is worked out according to the same system that I identified there. Right at the start, the statements in my work: "Science is, if we define the concept strictly, simply systematically-ordered knowledge. Knowledge means insight into the true constitution and relations of things" (p. 32) are robbed of the qualification given in the clause "and since, *depending on the state of this insight*, there can only ever be *one* truth", which is separated from the second sentence only by a comma, but which Kautsky *suppresses*. Then he cheekily claims that, according to me, knowledge means "hence insight into things in itself". After this, the phrase "insight into the true constitution and relations of things" is ignored, so that he can *falsely attribute* to me the "primitive Chinese" conception of science, that it was merely a matter of "systematic summary of all known facts" without regard for causality. As if the causal relationship were not a relation between things. Thus can Kautsky then lecture from on high this Chinese that he has constructed about how hypotheses belong to science. Since who knows my work so well as to remember that I expressly say there: "Even the strictest of the exact sciences cannot do without hypotheses for its further development"?

    The place where I say this, a conscientious critic should ignore even less, since there I equate what I present as the permitted utopianism of socialist theory to the scientific hypothesis. But what would become out of the closing punchline of Kautsky's article, that I am "laying down arms" before utopianism, if the reader were to find out what kind of utopianism it is that I declare permissible, and in what sense I do so? The punchline and the whole article reveal themselves as dissimulation as soon as one reads up on that passage and what follows immediately afterwards. Whereby then, however, is proved the "immanent necessity" of misappropriating my definition.

    Given the virtuosity that Kautsky has made his own in these procedures, he will again and again manage to turn the true line of thought in a work that he wishes to annihilate into its opposite, and so at least achieves fleeting success among the audience that does not read his opponent or does not seek to verify Kautsky's critique. So for a change, let him have the triumph of having struck dead his very own Boxer like a Hun.] Present volume, p. 360.

CHAPTER 24

The Core of the Dispute

A Final Word on the Question: How Is Scientific Socialism Possible?

Sozialistische Monatshefte 7(10) (October 1901), pp. 777–85.

Two discussions about my work *How is Scientific Socialism Possible?* now prompt me to revisit the topic once again. These discussions are the essay "Is There a Scientific Socialism?" by Ch. Rappoport in the *Revue Socialiste* of August 1901, and Wolfgang Heine's article in the September issue of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, which carries the same title as the address itself.[1]

Both critiques converge on one point. They accuse me, as incidentally other critics also do, of defining too narrowly the concept of science. Heine's justification for this charge I can assume is well-known here. That of Rappoport culminates in the passage with which his article closes:

> And to Bernstein's questions: Is scientific socialism possible? we answer: Yes, socialism as a science is possible, but under the condition that it ceases to be exclusively Marxist. In other words: scientific socialism has as its foundation the integral development of the individual and society.

How that should be understood it says in the bit that immediately precedes this passage. It reads:

> The economic conception of socialism only takes into account a part of the development of humanity. And for that part to become a whole, it must be complemented by a philosophical system whose solidity has never so far

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> been tested. Under these circumstances, socialism as a theoretical edifice can never be well-founded science, even when it applies a scientific method, albeit by applying it badly. Socialist theory will only have a scientific character when it succeeds in presenting socialism as a consequence of the all-round—*integral*—development of humanity, its economic as well as its political, moral, intellectual, subjective, and objective development. I am firmly convinced of the fact that this can happen by means of the teachings of "bourgeois" science and the ideas of our great masters from Plato to Marx and Lavrov. The application of the theory of development to subjective as well as objective factors of historical development conceived as a whole, of intellectual, moral, economic, political, juristic, artistic, etc., development will provide us with the solid cornerstones for a truly scientific socialist theory. Evolutionist theory is a valuable tool for sociological predeterminations, whose social or socialist conclusions have not yet been drawn to an exhaustive degree.[2]

According to that, scientific socialism does not yet exist, but it is possible for it do so. Marxism may well not yet have brought it about, but on the other hand it will become a reality as soon as socialism is proven to be the conclusion of the all-round development of humanity. But when will that be? According to Rappoport's depiction:—as soon as a synthesis is achieved between all the various developments he is talking about here, the enumeration of which he leaves at a treacherous "etc.". Yet I must entreat Rappoport to inspect and examine this "etc." somewhat more precisely, to see whether behind this harmless particle there does not yawn a chasm that by itself already makes the attainment of the product he aspires to from the promised synthesis seem somewhat doubtful. So-called integral socialism certainly had and has great merit as a reaction against the one-sided derivation of socialism from economics, as was just in vogue at the time in France. But for the question that I am dealing with, nothing in principle is changed at all if one puts integral socialism in place of its Marxist equivalent.

Quite apart from the fact that Rappoport, as I have already argued elsewhere, in my view defines Marxism excessively narrowly, integral socialism can no more than Marxist socialism dispense with the subjectivist element of *volition*.[3] It pauses far less even than Marxism does to establish what *is* and what inevitably *will be*, but rather *precisely it* regards its task as being that of positing an *ideal* of socialism, a picture of what *should* be. So if on page 209 Rappoport reaches down a kind of rescue ladder to me and writes:

> Perhaps Bernstein was misled to his conclusions, which we have recognised to be wrong, by the fact that he only has Marxist socialism in mind, and this theory does not conform to reality. He may be right about Marxism, but he is mistaken if he wants to deny the scientific character of socialist theory in general,

then he quite visibly did so with the best intentions, but cannot induce me to change my thesis.

For what Rappoport wants to see saved with me, or rather what he wants to save from me—allowing the title *scientific* for the *methods* of the theories of modern socialism—that is not only implicitly contained in the depiction in my address of the developmental relationship between the newer theories and those of the older socialists, but also expressly stated at the close of the address, where it reads in the final paragraph:

> By contrast, the name scientific socialism retains its full justification for me when the concept "scientific" in it is defined precisely in its critical sense, as a *postulate* and *programme*—as a *demand* that socialism makes *of itself*, and which conveys the idea that for what it wants *the scientific method and insight* have directive force.[4]

Like others among my socialist critics, Rappoport and Heine also breezed heedlessly past this sentence, which is really not that difficult to understand. Neither with the former nor in Heine can be found a remark that shows that they have read it, but in both of them there are very many passages from which it becomes evident that they have overlooked it. I can only regret that. For this sentence is not some opening incidental remark in that address, but rather the sentence in which the whole thing culminates. The final closing paragraph that follows it only summarises briefly once again the leading ideas of the address. But the sentence cited here gives the answer to the question: How is scientific socialism possible?, as is quite distinctly and decidedly obvious from its wording.

I think I am justified in saying that critique should not simply pass by this sentence especially. If this happened nonetheless with Rappoport and Heine—from whom evidently nothing lies further than any personal prejudice—even though the entire address did not even fill two print sheets, then I can only explain this by the fact that their essays were already written under the impression of critiques whose authors deliberately left this sentence out of their analyses. For assuming, but not admitting, that the idea that underlies it would not also otherwise have been expressed in the

address itself, then Heine as well as Rappoport would have saved themselves a good three-quarters of their critique if they had at least paid some regard to this passage, which forms the final part of the address.

Yet I must now still point out that the main body of the address itself already develops in what sense scientific socialism is not only possible in fact, but is also brought closer to realisation by the available socialist theoretical edifice. After all, I expressly observe that the so-called great utopians already mark a development of socialism in this sense "beyond utopianism". In particular, it says about Saint-Simon that "his imagination is thoroughly underpinned by scientific enquiry and inference" and that he "can be described as the father of modern sociology"; even his attempt to found a new Christendom "does not lie in any fundamental contradiction with the scientific character of his theory".[5] And only then does it say about Marxist theory that, even if here too science is not everything, still the scientific element in it "*is significantly more strongly founded and developed*" than in Owen, Fourier, or Saint-Simon:

> The domain that is freely left to the imagination, led by tendency and will, is *drawn more narrowly* and its direction *more sharply delimited*, but it has for all that still not completely disappeared.[6]

In other words: the essential scientific features of the Marxist theory are not disputed in any way; it is only established that in it, as a theory of socialism, science is not everything and, as is then further argued, it also *cannot* be everything. It is not the possibility of scientific foundations and fundamental principles for theories of socialism that is disputed, but rather the view that socialist theory can or must be *exclusively* a science.

It is a mystery to me how one can be of any other view as a Marxist—and on this point there can exist no difference in principle between Marxism and any "integral" socialism whatever.

Marxism conceives of the struggle for socialism as a class struggle between the modern working class and the capitalist classes and their retinue. The *fact* of this class struggle it explains scientifically, i.e., from the scientific investigation of modern society and its elements, from the historical living conditions of these classes. The *historical course of this struggle* it also seeks to establish scientifically. But here, where the *future* is in question, a moment of presumptive *estimation*, of hypothesis, already *necessarily* interferes in the picture. And if it must be admitted—and since it is also *expressly emphasised* in the address on page 22—that hypotheses still

belong to science, then it is after all clear at the same time that this belonging *does not yet make them equal in value* to it, but rather that hypotheses—the deductions derived according to the rules of logic from facts established in line with experience—lose ever more scientific force the more intermediary links come between them and their experiential foundation. Even though hypotheses can then still always have a significant heuristic value, i.e., they can indicate to researchers the direction of fruitful enquiry, they are no longer themselves science. To take an example from the exact sciences, it is well-known that atomic theory has been of the highest value for the science of matter, chemistry, even though it was for a long time only a hypothesis, and even today, where a tremendous amount of material of established facts is available that speak in favour of its validity, natural researchers avoid speaking of atomic science. For only the existence of entities that correspond to the atoms of chemistry can be considered proven; but about the nature of these entities, and whether they are truly and ultimately indivisible, nobody feels knowledgable enough to say anything.[7]

It is similar in the domain of social science. Only that its final unit, the human individual, is an infinitely more composite formation than the atom of the chemist, and its behaviour in complicated situations accordingly lets itself be predetermined with far less certainty than the behaviour of chemical atoms.[8] And so, as regards questions that affect social configurations, hypotheses are far more easily exposed to shedding their scientific character than in the natural sciences today.

Now does socialism today stop at the hypothesis that is still to be described as scientific? Anybody who claims this should be reminded that there is such a thing as a socialist end goal. Is this end goal science, or is it intertwined with additional elements that no longer belong to the domain of knowledge, but to that of volition?

That is the question, and with it is closely associated a second one: namely that of whether and to what degree Social Democracy as the party of socialism makes its judgment and its activity dependent on that end goal, or on the needs of the working class in the present day, and the scientific investigation of the tendencies and conditions of development of modern society.

Now then, any event or any occurrence that is supposed to be scientifically determinable must be a firmly-established necessity. Anybody who believes here that they can prove the socialist end goal as an inescapable and inevitable necessity has the right to include this end goal in the

scientific inventory of socialism. Anybody who does not have this belief, which amounts to a theory of social predestination, will not pass off this end goal as a science, even if they acknowledge it as thoroughly justified because it is purposively necessary.

Now in my view, the fact of the human capacity for will rules out the possibility of scientifically predetermining historical developments beyond certain general precepts. It is not absolutely impossible that everything that happens is predetermined by the given relationships of mass, distribution, and tension in world material [*Weltstoff*]—but at today's level of our insight it is in any case not scientifically provable, and in my opinion such proof will always find an insurmountable barrier in the fact of humans' capacity for thought and decision, and such a view will always remain a metaphysical hypothesis. And likewise all historical prognosis will consistently contain a hypothetical element, because humans' capacity for will introduces an incalculable element into all calculable historical forces. The so-called objective forces, to which also belongs production technology, have great but not unlimited determinant force.

In respect of this point, there is an interesting remark that Rodbertus makes in one of his letters to Rudolph Meyer, where among other things he seeks to prove to this then-ultraconservative the historical necessity of the authoritarian representative state at the given stage of development. It is in the letter of 23 December 1872 and reads:

> Is this conception of history and the state an infringement of the idea of human freedom? No! Though under this conception neither can the *social contract* (standing for liberalism) create the *individualistic state* it wants to any more, nor a scrimmaging medieval idea (the Romantic Stahl and his followers) create an *organic antiquarian state*, rather the human must *obey* the deity that prevails in history, but they still thereby possess as much freedom as is good for them; they still have a "freedom of variation [*Spielartenfreiheit*]", to express myself in this way, i.e., just as nature still tends to bring forth variants of a certain kind, so the manufacture of *variants* of kind of state that is inescapably determined in its place falls thoroughly to humans' freedom, and, as I have said, more freedom is not conducive for them at all.[9]

They still have a "freedom of variation". In my copy of the letters, the phrase *freedom of variation* is firmly underlined, and on the cover it is also additionally jotted in pencil. Both are by Marx, after I sent the book over to him and Engels on loan in winter 1881–1882. Given Marx's method of

taking notes, one can assume with certainty from this that the phrase had made a great impression on him.

But what does it mean, and the passage to which it belongs? Now evidently: that there is a reciprocal dependency between the foundations and forms of societal life, which the will of human beings cannot respectively remove, but that this dependency always still leaves the will room for variation. And it is clear that, the further off the time lies that is to be depicted in advance, this "room for variation" will be all the greater. With that, an end goal that is adjourned to any such time is to the appropriate degree de-scientised [*entwissenschaftlicht*], if I may express myself in such a way. And a socialist theory will be more scientific or not to the extent that it remains uninfluenced by such an end goal, i.e., restricts itself to establishing what provable tendencies and forces create the conditions for a socialist reshaping of society, for which reasons and perspectives it is worth aspiring to, and what hence must be the fundamental principles and guidelines of a socialist policy in state and economic life.

Certainly, with that it will still not yet become a pure science, but that is also neither necessary nor possible. For if socialism looks for its scientificity in the fact of being a pure science, it would have to abandon being the doctrine of a class, and the expression of the class aspirations of the workers. Here is the point where, by force of necessity, a separation takes place.

To put my conception quite starkly: Socialist theory is a science precisely insofar as its propositions can also be subscribed to by every non-socialist who is free of prejudice, and not influenced by countervailing interests. So, e.g., Marx's theory of value, which after all forms an element of Marxist socialist theory, has been recognised by many people who are not remotely Marxist socialists, and can also be recognised by people like that. The same is true of the materialist conception of history: one can be an adherent of it without being a socialist, in fact even as a decided enemy of socialism. Even the Marxist theory of production is not a specifically socialist theory, nor does the Marxist theory of ground rent claim a socialist character. They can all be correct without therefore bearing witness to the correctness of socialism. It is an absolute mystery to me how Heine can take umbrage at the fact that I say that I can no more recognise a specifically socialist social science than a liberal, conservative one, etc. He especially should agree with me that the scientificity of socialist theory is only guaranteed to the extent that it does not require any specific partisan tendency as its foundation. Only one thing is specifically socialist in

socialist theory: the *ethical* or *rights conception* [*ethische oder Rechtsanschauung*] that pervades its judgments. But, and this also turns itself against Rappoport's critique, a rights conception is not a science.

Now certainly one could come back again and deny my right to speak about a socialist rights conception as an element of socialist theory. Strictly observant Marxists famously do not like to hear about ethics, they would rather have Sombart attest that Marxist theory contains "not a shred of ethics". But this testimony by Sombart is only true insofar as Marxism is not socialist, i.e., it is not a specifically partisan science [*Parteiwissenschaft*]. Otherwise, Marxism carries its package of ethics around with it just as well as every other socialist theory, just that with it this carries another label. One can call the thing "the proletarian conception", and even the most rigid ultra-Marxist will graciously reconcile themselves with it.

Already several years ago I laid bare the self-deception that lies in the perception that Marxist socialism is free of ethical and other ideologies, and in doing so pointed to, *inter alia*, the ethical character of the so-called proletarian ideas. In the article in question—it was published in spring 1898 in *Neue Zeit* and was included in my collection *On the History and Theory of Socialism*—can also be found several passages that deal with the relationship between socialism and science, and which amount to the same as the core ideas of the address that is now being challenged—just as in general I did not say anything in this address that I had not already previously expressed in *Neue Zeit* and *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. Neither was it my intention to bring out fundamentally new ideas there, nor for that matter did it happen against my will. I am affirming this not to defend myself against a reproach to that effect, but only to show what sort of "nervousness" some people in our party have got to in these matters over time. At that time, the passages in question were still accepted without the cry: Rome is in peril! They read:

> … so it must already for that reason be emphasised, because the metaphorical description above ("proletarian ideas") mostly coincides with a use of the word science in connection with modern socialism that greatly provokes misunderstanding. Scientific socialism is spoken about as if the science in question here were something already fully settled and complete. But in fact the expression contains *a postulate alongside or with this qualification*. Every science as such is necessarily "agnostic", … can *never* regard its results *as final*.[10]

One should compare with this the conclusion cited above of the address in question, and one will straightaway notice that they agree. The 1898 essay then further refers to Engels' remark at the end of the second section of his work *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, where it says that with the two discoveries of the proof of surplus value and the materialist conception of history, socialism has become a science, and that it was now a matter of further elaborating these in all their individual details and connections.

With regard to the question preoccupying us here, it is of no concern for the attestative value of Engels' statement whether the two discoveries Engels is speaking about here actually fit the bill or not. For the question is not whether socialism *is* a science, but how it is *possible* for it to be a science. There it is simply a matter of the *properties* of the findings that Engels described, and in which he saw socialism taking shape as a science. But in this respect there is no doubt whatsoever that it is the replacement of subjective opinions by objective insights independent of partisan tendencies, the ascertainment of facts that—independently of the goodwill of individuals—push towards the socialist reformation of society and let it be recognised as the result of a development, rather than as an arbitrary, individually dreamt-up new creation, from which Engels derives the scientificity of socialism. And far from objecting in any way to the fundamental principle of this theory, I rather base myself thoroughly upon it when I say: the name scientific socialism signifies a demand for a critical conception of socialism that the theory described in this way places on its adherents, but it is not the proclamation of a specific socialist science.

In my answer to Ke.'s critique, I cited a statement by Antonio Labriola, in which the critical conception of socialism is presented as the identifying characteristic of the Marxist theory. Two further quotations may follow here, which are no less above suspicion than that one:

> The deficient insight of humanity, which gave such great concern to the utopians, cannot endanger the cause of socialist revolution—the idea will always be in a position to grasp the practical demands of life. To the degree that the material conditions of the new society mature, human insight into the necessary details of its constitution will also grow. But in the present day, the socialists' task consists simply in organising the proletariat and enlightening it about the economic conditions of its emancipation.
>
> In this way, socialism turns from a *utopian* into a *critical doctrine*.[11]

This on page 157 of the 1894 work *N. G. Chernyshevsky* by G. *Plekhanov*.

> After all, Marxism does not claim such a name—namely scientific—perhaps because it presumes to have scientifically solved all the world's mysteries. That would be an immodesty. The expression "scientific" is, we believe, supposed to be a statement of *modest self-limitation*, not a statement of presumptuous superiority. It is supposed to signify that in our thinking just as in our action we have to *subject* ourselves to the laws of a unified scientific method of research.[12]

This can be read on page 65 of *Neue Zeit* of 1898–1899, volume II, in the article "Bernstein and science" by S. *Gunter*—not the first available article by some random co-worker, but rather, as can be read in the introduction, an article that was accepted by the editors as part of the polemic that was being waged against me at the time, and which acted as the keystone of this polemic. Once again I plead with people to look up the final passage of my address, cited above. What does it say there about the postulate through which, for me, the name "scientific socialism" receives its full justification? Now: "through its conception in a *critical* sense", through the *demand placed on oneself* "that for what one *wants* the scientific method and insight have *directive force*."

The fundamentally identical lines of thought here and there stand out. And now let us marvel at the pace of our age. Two years ago, this idea seemed so unchallengeable to the editors of *Neue Zeit* that they let it stand without reservations in an article that was supposed to give their attacks on me philosophical consecration, and today an address that amounts to the same ideas is for them a "scientific abdication".[13]

* * *

It now still remains to discuss the question of whether the distinction that I draw between the social-policy doctrine and the scientific foundation of socialism—i.e., that I admit the possibility and necessity of a scientific foundation for socialism, but neither the possibility nor the necessity of a purely scientific socialist doctrine—whether this distinction has any justification at all or not. It is dealt with in the simplest way by pointing out that the colloquial usage of the word *scientific* is applied with very different meanings, so that in one of these senses it can still absolutely be appropriate whereas in one of the others it is already no longer admissible. In this

way, a doctrine that has sacrificed the claim to pure scientificity by adding subjective aspirations to the scientific insight that underpins it can still be very scientific compared to other doctrines in which the subjective element, dictated by interests or ideologies, exercises stronger determinant force, whereas doctrines that in general are only determined by ideologies self-evidently do not have a claim to scientificity even when they are constructed in a scientific way. So it is a matter of differences of degree. Now since the working class as a rising class has no interest in retaining what has become outdated, since all their interests point them towards further development of society in the sense of perfecting it, so too is socialism, as their doctrine—as I have expressed it in my address—capable of greater scientificity than any other party or class doctrine. To how high a degree it conforms to the ideal demand of strict scientificity, that lies in the hands of the party of socialism, Social Democracy, to determine. Today in Germany, as the debates about its end goal and similar questions have shown, it finds it right to stress the subjectivist element in its doctrine more strongly. There was a time—and it may come again—where one kept oneself within tighter limits in this. But a subjective moment will always remain, especially considering people will be glad of the aforementioned "freedom of variation" and hardly pass up the opportunity of making use of it. In one way or another, they will always form ideals for themselves, to which the concept "scientific" will only be able to apply in the formal sense, yet in a substantial, positivist sense only within a limited scope.

In fact, in my view, Heine has refuted nothing of what I argued in my address. He inserted a few intermediary parts into my thesis that were absent from what I said for reasons I have already mentioned earlier, but the end with him is the same as the final part of my address, which he overlooked. Apart from that, he also read some passages of my address differently than how I meant them. When, for example, I say on page 17 that the materialist conception of history too had been through its own particular quirks of fate, then that means, as already the phrase *changes in its assessment* indicates at that point, that at different times it was interpreted in various ways, but by no means that it had been thrown on the scrapheap. The entire bit to which the passage belongs is after all only supposed to show—wherein Heine is in agreement with me—that the guarantee of the scientificity of socialism is not to be found in the individual propositions on which the theory is constructed, but must be looked for elsewhere. Where—that does not need to be said again after what has gone before.

I do not in any way consider a scientific theory of socialism to be impossible. I have only declared a specifically socialist social science to be an absurdity, and I cleave fast to that. There are many theories of society, but only one science of society, towards which the theories behave like parts towards a whole.

Science stands above these theories, just as it stands above parties. Parties can certainly harness its knowledge and enlist it into their service, but they cannot subject science to themselves. In this vein it reads in my article of 1898, and with this I can close this essay:

> Socialism as a science has other tasks than Social Democracy as a campaigning party. The latter, as the upholder of specific interests, may be dogmatic and even intolerant within certain boundaries. Its resolutions, which refer to action, count as binding until it overturns or changes them itself. Likewise the passages of its programme that establish the character and the aspirations of the party. But for its scientific preconditions it can self-evidently only claim conditional recognition, since scientific research is supposed to strive to go ahead of the party as a *scout* [*Pfadfinder*], not *to march behind it in its wake*.[14]

Notes

1. Charles Rappoport, 'Y a-t-il un socialisme scientifique', *Revue socialiste* 200 (August 1901), pp. 195–212. Wolfgang Heine (1861–1944), German lawyer and social-democratic politician, early supporter of Bernstein's revisionism, served in the Prussian government during the Weimar Republic. Charles Rappoport (1865–1941), Russian-French communist activist, journalist, and writer, early member of the 'Zimmerwald Left' and representative to the Comintern, left the French Communist Party [*Parti Communiste Français*] over Stalinisation.
2. Rappoport, 'Y a-t-il un socialisme scientifique', p. 212.
3. [Ed. B.—cf. the discussion of the German edition of Lavrov's *Historical Letters* and Rappoport's introduction to it in *Vorwärts* of 18 August 1901. Under Marxism here are understood naturally the theories laid down by Marx himself and Engels, and not perhaps their interpretation by people whose "Marxism" Marx himself said he could not join in with.]
4. Present volume, p. 363.
5. Ibid., p. 358.
6. Ibid.

7. Bernstein was writing before Ernest Rutherford first developed the nuclear model of the atom in 1911.
8. [Ed. B.—*Final* here in the sense of *smallest*. For it has been disputed—and with good reason—that the biological individual, called the human being, can also be described as an individual in social terms.]
9. Karl Rodbertus, *Briefe und Sozialpolitische Aufsätze*, (ed.) Rudolf Meyer (Berlin: Adolf Kleins, 1880), vol. I, pp. 269–70.
10. Eduard Bernstein, *Zur Geschichte und Theorie des Sozialismus* (Berlin-Bern: Akademischer Verlag für soziale Wissenschaften Dr. John Edelheim, 1901), pp. 270–1.
11. Georgi Plekhanov, *N.G. Tschernyschewskij* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz, 1894), p. 157.
12. S. Gunter, 'Bernstein und die Wissenschaft', *Neue Zeit* 17/2(47) (1899), p. 650.
13. [Ed. B.—That Gunter's passage told me nothing new is shown by the passage cited above from the 1898 article about the ideological element in socialism.]
14. Bernstein, *Zur Geschichte und Theorie des Sozialismus*, p. 271.

CHAPTER 25

On the German Worker Past and Present

Sozialistische Monatshefte 8(3) (March 1902), pp. 174–85.

Under the title "Past and Present", Dr. Paul Ernst, an erstwhile member of the Social-Democratic Party, has published an essay in *Zukunft* of 1 February 1902, in which he makes very pessimistic observations about some faded illusions concerning Social Democracy and the German workers.[1] Once a party that wanted to fight for the highest and best goals of humanity, Social Democracy has sunk to the level of a party of the purely egotistical interests of a single population class—namely the workers, who in themselves, i.e., without these higher aspirations, formed "the most worthless and uninteresting" class of society, and also factually did not aspire to anything further than to make it to a petty-bourgeois existence.

For this article, *Vorwärts* has branded Ernst as a renegade, and concluded the notice in which it did so in a way that seems entirely inappropriate to us, and which whoever wrote it will themselves surely also have come to regret in the meantime. It is only to be excused by the agitation that will have overwhelmed its author on a first reading of Ernst's article. Undoubtedly, the article deserves a sharp rebuke. We perceive its tendency somewhat differently than *Vorwärts* did: we see in it more the product of a petulant mood than an intentional diatribe against Social Democracy. But even the mildest interpretation cannot free Ernst from the fact that his reading of the resolution of the Lübeck party congress regarding the author of this piece—according to which this resolution expressed

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"consciously and clearly" that they, the workers, "do not want to undertake further scientific development of their theories"—is *grossly inaccurate*, as the introductory statement of that resolution unmistakeably shows, and that also Ernst's further conclusions evidence a stark misrecognition of the course of development of the German working class and Social Democracy. The following reflections are concerned not with the Lübeck resolution—which actually nobody who was not present in Lübeck can correctly assess, and in which one can perhaps find an unintentional contradiction, but under no circumstances any outlawing of further scientific development of socialist theory—but with Ernst's remarks about the nature and development of the working class.

In my view, one will be able to agree with Ernst on this point from the outset to the extent that, *if* the workers really only represented the most proximate economic interests of their class, without any goals that go beyond certain material improvements, they also could not claim any extraordinary interest as a class. Yet even then it would be fundamentally wrong and a proof of a complete misrecognition of the forces that affect civilised humanity to speak of the working class, as Ernst does, as the class that is "in itself the most worthless and uninteresting". Whatever the workers may think and want and however they may act: the economic shape of modern society has given them a significant role in further development. Today, in the city and the municipality, they play such an important role in the most various respects that one should not think to find such an expression or thought even in an only semi-informed conservative, let alone a man who had belonged to Social Democracy for many years and proved that he sought to be more than a conventional hanger-on. *Aliquid semper haerebat*—for anyone who was once a social democrat with body and soul, and who did not go completely daft, certain things were hitherto simply impossible, whatever situation or party stance they later fell into.

What Ernst, whose talent and studiousness one cannot deny, wanted to say in our view with the statement cited above, but which in his vexatiously slovenly manner he put in a very wry form, is that the working class is composed of individuals who in themselves—i.e., so far as they do not represent those higher goals—constitute the most worthless and uninteresting elements of society. For he also further tries to justify that with the remark that the elements who lie on the lowest rungs of the social ladder have, besides their own, also all the flaws of the higher classes, but whose virtues they only have to a weakened degree, while their own virtues are not very great or creative.

But this explication, which reminds us strongly of Nietzsche and probably also emerged under his influence, is—like so much about Nietzscheanism—a mixture of right and wrong, and leads to wrong-headed conclusions. Even if one does not take the working class as a social unit in which a particular historical mission resides, but rather, in line with the old bourgeois conception, as a mere collective entity of individuals in a certain life situation, even then it is fundamentally wrong that the workers are as intellectually inferior in value as he suggests here.

The desire to portray workers as individuals any differently from how they really are cannot lie further from anyone's mind than from the writer of these lines. I have at all times turned most decidedly against any kind of worship of the mass, and my effort to oppose exaggerations that threatened to creep into socialist literature in this respect is precisely the point that has brought me into conflict with some literary representatives of the Marxist school. What I have written about this in the final chapter of the work *The Preconditions of Socialism* expresses a conviction I have come by over the course of many long years, and which I thoroughly maintain. But one can fight against supra-Marxist cant without for that reason falling victim to Nietzschean cant.

* * *

I am using the term *supra-Marxist cant* to forestall the perception that I hold the endowment of the working class with the attribute of perfection [*Vollkommenheit*] to be a necessary constituent part of Marxist theory. Undoubtedly, Marx and Engels at various times overestimated the maturity of the working class, and imputed into the working class inclinations and capacities that as yet were only present among a small minority of workers, and only partially even with these. But there they did not, as Ernst argues, fall prey to a deception that only later revealed itself as such, but rather have merely drawn excessively hasty conclusions from a theory that was in the main accurate—conclusions that the occasion soon presented itself to correct.

Such a correction was the famous address at the time of the schism in the Communist League, in which Marx claimed for himself and his tendency the credit, in contrast to the Willich–Schapper faction, which was raising the word *proletarians* to the level of having an "aura of sanctity", for pointing out to the German workers "how rudimentary the development of the German proletariat is", and saying to them that they

> will have to go through 15, 20, 50 years of civil wars and national struggles not only to bring about a change in society but also to change yourselves, and prepare yourselves for the exercise of political power.[2]

I have so far not yet found any confirmations in the literature that this happened with such clarity. Only in the address to the leadership of the Communist League of March 1850 is there a statement that can be understood in this way. But with this, it is doubtful whether in the moment where its author Marx formulated it he meant it like this, and even if this was the case, it was hardly interpreted in this way by its readers. It reads:

> If the German workers are not able to attain power and achieve their own class interests without completely going through a lengthy revolutionary development, they at least know for a certainty this time that the first act of this approaching revolutionary drama will coincide with the direct victory of their own class in France and will be very much accelerated by it.[3]

Very detailed reflection is needed about the connection between the respective social constitution of a country and the level of development of its population classes, and a very precise knowledge of the social constitution of Germany to work out that the statement about the revolutionary development that they have to go through also embodies the idea of a necessary essential change in the workers themselves. Given the entire context of the circular, the average reader could only understand that bit in such a way that it was merely talking about using ceaseless revolutionary action to enjoin the petty-bourgeois democracy that was shortly about to come to power to make concessions that would ultimately make the proletarian-communist revolution unavoidable, and that is also how Marx's then-League colleagues Schapper, Willich, and their comrades really understood it. Exactly as forty years later the Young Ones [*die Jungen*] in German Social Democracy took "literally, all too literally" certain statements by Engels about the level of development of Germany and the German workers without the necessary pinch of salt, and thereby earned for themselves a rectification from Engels that came out no less harshly than the critique that Marx levelled against Willich–Schapper in his piece about the Communist Trial in 1852. But even if Marx in 1850 and Engels in his publications of the 1880s with their remarks about the impending prospects of the workers' revolution did not want to be taken literally, but only conceived them in relative terms, it would still be

fundamentally wrong to presume that they were fully conscious of all the differences between the real state of things and the wording of these statements. Rather, their rich economic knowledge and their acutely realistic perspective did not prevent them—as already the statement about the "certainty" of the "direct" imminent victory of the workers in France in 1850 indicates—from often hastening far ahead of reality in their generalisations, from assuming a speed of development that did not match the reality, and from imputing to the working class virtues and capacities that historical development should as yet only bring to maturity. They have—so far, Ernst is right—repeatedly quite significantly overestimated the available insight, the theoretical perspective, and the energy [*Tatkraft*] of the workers. As I have explained years and years ago elsewhere, it is to trace back their erroneous predictions of historical catastrophes to far weightier flaws if one denies that the explanation for them is to be found here.[4]

* * *

Lassalle in his more mature epoch kept himself much freer from overestimations of such a kind. In the time of 1848, his notions about the working class had still strongly moved in the same channels as those of Marx and Engels. But later, a more critical perspective comes to light in his letters and works. In 1860, he expresses himself very pessimistically in one of his letters to Marx, which deals with their conflict over how to assess the Italian war, and over the workers and their behaviour towards their standard-bearers. With them it goes, he writes, "like with maidens: out of sight, out of mind". And if here his chagrin about a "complaint" that had seemingly come from workers had perhaps excessively sharpened his pen, then still there also speaks from out of the first speech with which Lassalle again appears before the workers, from out of his *Workers' Programme*, a strong empathy for the fact that the workers had by far not yet reached the intellectual height appropriate to their historical mission. "The vices of the oppressed no longer become them, nor the idle scattiness of the thoughtless, nor even the harmless levity of the insignificant"—how different does this statement sound from those depictions according to which the workers (already who knows how early) are supposed to be ethically *and* intellectually superior to the other classes. But this was preceded by that fine discussion in which Lassalle explains perceptively *that* and *why* the worker, *as soon as they have recognised their class interest*, and *act* according to it,

necessarily occupies a higher stage of morality than the member of the ruling classes led by class interest. The worker, who seeks the improvement of their *personal* situation in the improvement of the situation of their *class* is thereby driven to bring their endeavours into unity with the progressive development of the entire people, "with the victory of the *idea*, with the advances in *culture*, with the vital principle of history itself, which is nothing other than the development of freedom".[5] Certainly, among the working class there is still far too much reprehensible selfishness. But the workers are in the fortunate situation that what constitutes their *true personal interests* coincides "with the beating pulse of history, with the driving vital principle of ethical development".[6]

How deep an impression these arguments have made on thousands and thousands of workers all those will attest who still lived through the era of the German workers' movement that followed Lassalle's emergence. And they contain so far not an iota of exaggeration. When Lassalle said to the workers: You are the rock on which the church of the future shall be built!, he *raised them up*, but he gave them no occasion for hubris, which could turn its point against them. Here, he strictly follows the idea that he expresses with respect to the dogmas of *sansculottisme*, and which likewise applies to the supra-Marxism identified above, as well as to the Nietzschedom in which Paul Ernst seems to fancy himself: "Nothing is more dangerous than a truth that appears in an untrue, twisted form." For if the former has the flaw that it pre-empts the future or treats what is still in the process of emerging as something that has already happened, then the deceptive conclusion of Ernst's deduction consists in the fact that he regards established tradition as something that will last eternally, and recidivism as a symptom of what is emerging.

There was a time where what Ernst says about the relationship of classes to the ideal of humanity, namely that the classes approached this ideal less the further down they lay on the rungs of the social ladder, was in general correct, and remnants of this period also still loom into our time. But as numerous as they may be, they still belong to these residues insofar as they no longer represent the typical picture for our time. That is now so little the case that even the way in which Lassalle presents the relationship at the cited point is no longer quite correct today, and is not enough to describe the intellectual heights that the working class has reached.

Lassalle only emphasises the *moral* [*sittlich*] or rather *ethical* [*ethisch*] effect of the workers' class situation on them, specifically the elevation that their ethical sensibility must undergo through their consciousness of the

historical stance and mission of their class. Apart from the fact that such a consciousness itself already encompasses a *recognition* [*Erkennen*] and *knowledge* [*Wissen*], i.e., a certain *intelligence*, he does not go into the *intellectual* side of the question. In part, this is because this did not belong to his topic's line of thought, and Lassalle strongly insisted on giving his addresses a strictly unified character; but also in part because he really did not place a very high value on the intelligence that the working class had attained. As his Frankfurt speech shows, he made no secret of that whatsoever, and even more clearly than there he expresses himself about this point in his answer to the editors of the *Kreuzzeitung*. There he says:

> I am the first to declare that any social improvement *would not even be worth the effort* if even after it—which is fortunately objectively quite impossible—the workers personally remained what they are in their great mass today.[7]

One should note the intermediary phrase: "*which is fortunately objectively quite impossible*". It shows how firmly Lassalle was convinced that the political and economic elevation of the working class necessarily included its moral and intellectual elevation. He continues: "But what would be the first step towards their subjective elevation? It would be the *education* [*Erziehung*] of the worker through *obligatory and free teaching* in a quite different scope than that in which weak seeds of it are present today." But that is, it says soon after, "only thinkable with the general and direct franchise". He evidently wants to say that only the pressure of the general franchise will move those who are in power to approve the great means required for this teaching, and this has been confirmed in general also by experience. Yet in this it is still only a matter of an education that is to be instilled in workers calculatedly and consciously by *other people*, and accordingly it would only come into its own as an intellectual factor to the extent that such education had been inculcated into them. But Lassalle does not conceive of the matter so tightly. He further demanded for the workers their own intellectual activity, exercised by them in their capacity as a *mass*. He sets this down in one of his statements, which he recommends in the cited essay to the editors of the *Kreuzzeitung* "to their most serious consideration". "There is *nothing that has greater affinity to true intelligence than the healthy reason of the great masses.*" The reason for this is clear: the spirit of the *masses* is, appropriate to their mass *situation*, always directed to *objective*, to *factual* purposes. The voices of unquiet,

personality-obsessed individuals would here fade away in this harmony of voices without being heard at all.

Taken in absolute terms, this statement is very debatable, not least since Lassalle uses it at the point in question in a way to which legitimate objections can be raised. But if one links it to the argument given in the *Workers' Programme*, according to which the workers are steered by their interest towards what is historically necessary in the vein of progress—and here Lassalle surely also has this idea in view—then it takes on a very justified core and deserves, *inter alia*, also to be considered "most seriously" by Herr Ernst. However deficient the knowledge of individual workers may be: where the workers act as a mass today, in the great majority of cases there they form an *intelligent*, *creative force*, there—as the author of this piece has already often discussed—the idiosyncrasies of individuals, which result from their deficient education, bad surroundings and reading, etc., vanish and the endeavours that are common to all on the basis of their class situation, which lie along the trajectory of societal progress, win the upper hand. Even in exceptional cases, where for whatever reasons workers apparently formulated resolutions that were counter-progressive, it turns out on closer inspection often enough that they had either merely chosen the lesser of two evils or were the victims of wrongly-posed questioning.

* * *

Yet we are by no means at an end with this latent intelligence of the working class, which awaits its unfolding through mass actions. Quite apart from their education through all manner of specific formative institutes [*Bildungsinstitute*], a great part of the workers undergoes a manner of schooling within their jobs themselves, the effect of which is often very significant for refining their intellect. Here I have less their technical than their *social* education in mind. Life throws the worker about a lot, and only rarely does one of them find a tolerably stable existence right from the start. Most of them already come to know and compare very varied conditions comparatively early, bolstered by the circumstance that no more intensive property interest clouds their vision, that their class situation rather encourages a critical disposition, and insights and judgments among the more awakened of them, which anybody who only takes into account their school education and maybe also their somewhat superficial life experience would never suspect in them. The percentage of these more

awakened elements is also by no means small, even if it is only a comparatively small number who, so to speak, take their light out from under their bushel. In general, the worker only grudgingly decides to present their ideas on the rostrum or in the press. Precisely the most intelligent elements there often suffer from an excessive mistrust in themselves, caused by their consciousness of the inadequacy of their formal knowledge, the value of which they overestimate. I have heard workers, who in assembled gatherings never speak up, develop in conversation a clarity of thinking and a fullness of knowledge and experience that must command the highest respect from every listener, and I am indebted for much valuable instruction to workers who waged a constant battle with orthography. Often it only needs an external occasion to turn a worker who is seemingly going about their life as a run-of-the-mill person into a speaker of repute, a treasured writer, or a proficient administrator. The great number of former workers who have made a name for themselves in other branches of activity than their original profession bears striking witness to this, and who will claim that the destiny for such distinction has already found the greatest part of all those who are called to it? Certainly, there are workers and there are workers, and alongside the particularly intellectually-active minority there are a gradated succession of less active elements, down to the lowest *stratum*, which partly as a result of their deficient natural accoutrements and partly under the pressure of particularly unfavourable external circumstances lack the vigour that could elevate them intellectually or morally beyond their material situation. But anyone who tends to interact with workers to any degree—and every social policymaker should be doing so—will soon discover that, on average, they are rarely themselves "uninteresting" as individuals.

* * *

But under no circumstances are they this as a *class*. This is already prevented by the significance that they have attained in the present day in the most varied respects for society: as bearers of industry, as a growing factor in consumption, as the majority of the population in the centres of public life, and ultimately, but not least, as voters for public bodies. How different does the working class look with regard to all these points today compared with the state of affairs that Lassalle saw before him when he wrote the passages cited earlier!

With a population of 19 million, Prussia, the decisive state in Germany, in 1861 numbered only 766,180 auturgic persons in the manufacturing industry, and *included* in this number were already the general managers and their clerks. More than two thirds of the population lay in the flatland, but in the cities skilled crafts and trades and their customs still predominated. Aside from mechanical engineering and some related industries, the *factory workers* lay materially and intellectually *below* the *crafts workers*, of whom in turn, however, many still, equal in number to the agricultural workers, ate at the table of the *master as members of the household*, i.e., still came very little into consideration as independent consumers. Disorganised in industry, as buyers of low significance, a minority even in most centres, certain still to be crushed in elections for the time being by a rural population that was still so backwards—that was the position of the working class in Prussia at the start of the 1860s; and in the greatest part of the rest of Germany things did not look any better.

When the writer of this piece joined Social Democracy now over 30 years ago, much had already changed in this, and when he left Germany at the end of the 1870s, industry had in the interim gained greatly in stature compared to 1861. All the same, the industrial census of 1875 only yielded 43,513 industrial enterprises of over five persons, which together comprised 1,328,750 people. Still, in terms of the number of members, trades and crafts predominated, but their workers' assertion of independence had already made great forward strides. Likewise, the working class had advanced intellectually, yet among its ranks one still came across much rawness and ignorance.

One will find it conceivable that, once I returned to Germany, I made the most of every opportunity that presented itself to me to carry out comparisons between then and now. Yet even if I had not done that on my own initiative, the differences would have foisted themselves onto me of their own accord. Anyone who lives consistently in the same country frequently lacks the right gauge to assess many of the changes that have gone on; because they have seen them take place step by step in small stages, they make no strong impression on them. It is different with someone who has returned after a longer absence. For them, the state of things as they were when they left them still appear vividly before their eyes, and so they know how to appreciate the distance between them and what has happened now all the more. Here I must now say that, so far as I had the opportunity to examine it, barely any factor caught my eye as strongly as the progress in the intellectual *niveau* of the working class. One may be of

as divergent an opinion as one likes about the question of the workers' economic betterment, one may argue about whether the undeniable improvements regarding the length of working time, level of money wages, etc., are not accompanied by changes for the worse that in a purely economic respect again cancel out their advantages—I want to leave this point undiscussed here.[8] But their intellectual elevation seems to me to be entirely undeniable. Self-evidently there is still very much to improve here as well, if circumstances are nothing less than perfect. I will also not presume to offer any verdict about how things stand with the advances in school life. Further, I want to leave entirely to one side the upper *stratum* of highly-qualified workers, who after all also in my time and even earlier already demonstrated a high degree of intelligence, but has since then significantly increased in the number of its members. What strikes me the most is the great frequency of cases where one hears from members of the *strata* right at the bottom, from among the ranks of the "unqualified", from handymen, navvies, porters, etc., answers or discussions that let one surmise an absolute interest in and understanding of questions that lie fairly far removed from the affairs that affect them directly, and how often these answers are given, if not in grammatically-correct German, then still—what is far more important and above all can serve as an indicator of their intellectual level—in coherent, logically-ordered sentences. One had to have heard the clumsiness with which the members of these professions mostly expressed themselves before to be able to appreciate the difference between then and now. Their behaviour too has greatly improved. Along with their *roughness* the *servility* that accompanied it has declined—regrettably not yet to the extent that should be the case. Here progress is hampered precisely by the circumstance that in Germany, or at least in Prussia, we have not even managed to reach a bourgeois nature in our intercourse at all, but are still strongly stuck in late feudalism. All the same, a more candid demeanour manifests itself, which implies a heightened extension of their perspectives.

How much of this is to be ascribed to the *Volksschule* [public elementary school] is, as I have mentioned, beyond my more exact estimation. But in touching on this point, it should be mentioned that the *Volksschule* as a social or social-political factor is of greater influence than one generally imagines. Paul Ernst, like many before him, objecting to Marx's view of the capacity of the working class to rule, raises the question of how it could be that English Chartism could vanish with so little trace. Now, a substantial cause of the collapse of the Chartist movement is to be found

in the fact that until 1870, England had no schooling law, that the mass of the English workers grew up without any systematic tuition, and in this state of mind, when the period of the first storms had passed, lost its belief in a higher social mission. England's industry and its well-developed public life taught the workers so far that they became capable of organising themselves, to wrest concessions from the business-owners, but the worker had to lose their belief that their class was called to greater things if they saw that the great mass of their class comrades could barely read and write. Only since primary schooling has been generally introduced and gradually improved have generations come up more recently with whom a passable formal education is added to the first kind of schooling, and the consequences are also already making themselves felt.

Germany had the *Volksschule* earlier and industry later. To the effects of the former have been added in more recent decades the consequences of the almighty upheavals in the *structure of professions* [*Berufsgliederung*], in *geographical distribution*, and *intercourse*, to completely change the psychology of the working class. City culture and intellectual trends predominate today, and already in numbers alone the urban population has overtaken that of the countryside, to which also comes, however, the influence of steadily increasing intercourse, in which the stronger intellectual current—and that is today more than ever the urban one—subjugates the weaker: the city is overwhelmingly active, the countryside becomes ever more passive and even loses the capacity to offer passive resistance. Our farmers complain that the urban spirit is gripping their agricultural workers; they forget that their economic distress for the greatest part is the consequence of the fact that they themselves have ceased to live in a farmerly way. Beforehand, the mass of industrial workers too came from the countryside and brought the views of the countryside with them, which only slowly and superficially gave way to those of the city. Today, the mass of wage-labourers belongs to industry, lives in cities or city-type industrial towns, and the new arrivals from the countryside are assimilated by them in a short time. To these quite objective factors comes the influence of *public life*, which unfolds itself ever more with us too, the almighty educative influence of *socialist agitation*, *trade unionism*, *electoral campaigns*, and the *press*. Paul Ernst sings the old tune about the worsening of literature by the daily press: first the magazine has crowded out the book, then the newspaper the magazine, and so thought is becoming ever more trivially degenerate. That is correct for a comparatively quite modest part of the population. For the mass things are different. For the time being, the press acts as a factor on

the side of progress for them. For better or worse, it contributes to carrying awareness of events in the most various domains of intellectual life into the most backward circles of the population, and to stirring up interest in them. If one takes in view the overall average, then it is also not true that the press has become worse. What delectable fare it was that was previously offered to the great mass in the smaller cities and in the countryside!

So from all sides forces work to foster the working class in its social respect. It is well-known what a significance it has attained through its sheer numbers for politics and the economy. In 1895, there were 5,956,000 workers counted in industry, and only 5,628,000 in agriculture. But the former feed nearly 7 million family-members, the latter only 3.1 million, and they numbered among their ranks a greater percentage of the most productive, intellectually the most active age groups than the other. Of 100 male industrial workers, 45.12 were married, of 100 male agricultural workers only 32.78. But to the industrial workers should also be added the mass of employees in trade and transport, whereas a great part not only of the agricultural workers but also the petty farmers as relatives of industrial workers come ever more under their influence. But if we take only the latter by themselves, then we see in any case an incessant increase in their number, in their consolidation, in their economic significance, and in their political impact, ever more exposed to influences that hone their intelligence and raise their self-consciousness as a class, and for that reason already it is simply impossible for the social policymaker to say of it that it is in itself the most uninteresting and worthless class. But to this comes the fact that the class of industrial workers is tied with all their living conditions, all their hopes to the progress of society, and therefore too of all classes is the one that from stage to stage advocates this with ever greater determination, and ever more proves itself the most reliable guarantor of free thought and free enquiry.

All the same, one may not take too literally the slogan about the theoretical good sense that the workers profess in contrast to the bourgeois classes. It only hits home in the sense developed above, in that among workers in general a stronger critical vein is to be found than among the average of the remaining classes. This critical disposition is the precondition for theoretical thinking; but whether it leads to detailed preoccupation with theoretical questions, to real theorising, that depends very much on circumstances. In the beginnings of the movement, a ravenous hunger for theoretical readings prevailed among the workers who had been gripped by socialism. No wonder then that from this ravenous hunger

exaggerated conclusions were drawn. Today, it has receded a lot, and traces of a certain cloying satiation show themselves vis-à-vis everything that looks like theory. This reaction can bring strongly idealistically-disposed natures to the belief that there is nothing whatsoever to be done with the theoretical sensibility of the working class. But that is an exaggeration in the opposite direction. The intensive preoccupation with theory was previously a form of struggle dictated by circumstances by the socialist workers against the enemies of socialism, precisely because the struggle itself was still predominantly a mere battle of *ideas*, and the workers could only in exceptional cases wage a struggle over material things with the old classes. Today this struggle has become the rule, today critique that was previously conducted abstractly and in generalisations is rendered ever more *concretely* and *ad hominem* in the struggle itself. In fact, anybody who looks more closely will find that in the workers' movement today *theory* is *studied* and *lectured on* [*doziert*] *using the things themselves.* I do not deny that certain disadvantageous effects are associated with this—that with the division of labour that is unavoidable in this way, the sense for the unifying fundamental ideas can be impaired—and if I should give expression to my subjective feelings, then I must say that the disappearance of theoretical discussions from party assemblies has at first touched me almost painfully. But if one casts one's gaze over the entire movement, then one can also see that it objectively brings to view that unity of fundamental ideas to a certain degree automatically again and again afresh—that the struggling working class is in the fortunate situation of the revolutionaries of 1789, in whose name Mirabeau, as Jaurès emphasises in his impressive history of that revolution, could one day rightly say: "We now have to dedicate ourselves exclusively to the struggle, for we have *an excess of ideas.*"

And if Ernst ultimately believes that the free proletarian exists "only as a means for the purposes of society", and has for that reason "the psychological constitution of a means", and could "never take over the functions of mastery [*Herrenfunktionen*]", then we want to retort to this Nietzschean, with all respect for the bit of truth that lies in the theories of his master, that a zest of truth from a quirky maxim does not yet wisdom make. There is exorbitant exaggeration in his choice of phrase about the "functions of mastery". In the face of the purposes of society, we are all means; modern society is far too all-encompassing, its organism far too well-developed than that even the greatest geniuses, even the most powerful personalities could be anything else within it. Of path-breaking minds, which at no time have ever been the monopoly of a single class, there are

fewer than ever today, and with the advancing elevation of the working class there will be ever fewer still. When Ernst wrote that passage, did he think of the fact that today more than three-quarters of the persons who are entering economic life belong to the working class? Has he reminded himself what a host of leading elements of all kinds the working class today brings forth from out of its own ranks in the form of its officials and representatives? We doubt it greatly. Whatever constitution society will give itself in future, one thing is already becoming distinctly apparent today: it is precisely the great manifoldness of functions that will make "mastery [*Herrentum*]" unnecessary and impossible. The "free proletarian" has neither individually to take on "functions of mastery", nor will they want to do so. They can let themselves be satisfied with exercising real leadership of society through the means of their class, just as overall progress becomes ever more the result of collective achievements. In the intellectual domain too their motto is: *Human beings shall be neither masters nor servants.*

Notes

1. Carl Friedrich Paul Ernst (1866–1933), German author and journalist, social-democratic activist, above all concerned with the capacity of Marxist strategy to bring about legislative workers' protections.
2. Karl Marx, 'Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 11: Marx and Engels 1851–53* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), p. 403.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Address of the Central Authority to the League, March 1850', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 10: Marx and Engels 1849–51* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), pp. 286–7.
4. [Ed. B.—cf. *On the History and Theory of Socialism*, pp. 350–6.]
5. [Ed. B.—*Collected Works*, volume II, pp. 43–4.]
6. [Ed. B.—*op. cit.*, p. 44.]
7. [Ed. B.—*op. cit.*, volume III, p. 277.]
8. [Ed. B.—After the first lecture that I held on German soil—it was a May Day speech to the Berlin carpenters—at the end of the meeting a worker who knew me from before came up to me, greeted me, and then said among other things: "Well then, things really are a bit different today than they used to be? 12 hours working time, 17½ *groschen* daily wage—us carpenters have moved on past that!".]

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CHAPTER 26

The Latest Prognosis of Social Revolution

Sozialistische Monatshefte 8(8) (August 1902), pp 584–98.

Under the overarching title *Social Revolution*, K. Kautsky has just had two addresses appear in print that he held some time ago in Holland.[1] The first, as its title *Social Reform and Social Revolution* indicates, establishes the relationship between what one customarily describes as social reform and those radical changes for which the description *social revolution* might rightly be used. The second, with the separate title *On the Day after the Social Revolution*, discusses how Kautsky imagines that matters will develop after the great transformation that lies before society today, and for which Social Democracy is fighting. The first claims to be an entirely scientific exposition, whereas in the second, fantasy or speculative reflection plays a certain role, so that, without thereby already wishing to cast judgment here, one can describe it as a "utopia" in the broader sense of the word, in accordance with which it merely describes what does not or does not yet exist, but in no way decides in advance the question of the possibility, probability, or expediency of what it is that does not exist.

The addresses polemicise in a way that is impossible to misunderstand against what has been described as the "revisionist" tendency within the socialist camp today, and are praised by Kautsky's friends as achievements that have eviscerated it. So it says in an article in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, written by someone close to Kautsky, his writings blast "*like a fresh wind through all the revisionist fog*".[2] This makes it necessary for the

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representatives of revisionism to engage with these addresses. This applies particularly to the author of this piece, against whom by-the-bye Kautsky's attacks are turned often enough as well, albeit never by name. Hence let us look somewhat more closely at how things stand with the defogging power of Kautsky's explications. In this, it is almost exclusively the first piece that comes into consideration.

I

As is only fair, Kautsky opens his investigation of the nature of social revolution with a *determination of concepts*, in the attempt to scientifically delimit the concept of social revolution. Here, he follows on from the passage by Marx, who portrays social revolution as follows:

> The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.[3]

According to that, changes in society's economic foundations are excluded from the concept of social revolution; they are the *cause* of the revolution, not the revolution itself.

A decidedly false conclusion. Precisely according to Marx's conception, change in the economic foundations belongs to social revolution, and the radical transformation of the superstructure is not to be separated from it. The process completes itself under continuous reciprocity. Indeed, Marx also in no way intends for such a division. He characterises the epoch of social revolution by saying: "*with* the changes in the economic foundation, the whole immense superstructure is sooner or later transformed". This *with* is naturally not to be understood in the sense of a necessary parallelism of chronological order, but it rules out an interpretation that presumes that they will be wholly consecutive in their timing. Now there are all manner of stages in economic developments, and if one perhaps merely mentions the *starting-point* of any such stage, as Kautsky does, e.g., with a steam engine, and in particular the discovery of America, which *introduced* certain changes, then it is certainly easy to get to the division described above. But that is then to put a part in place of the whole, a proceeding by force of which one—mostly without the overwhelmed reader being quite aware of the false conclusion—can always prove whatever one wants to in that moment. That is in fact also fairly often the case with Kautsky, when he pursues certain polemical aims. The

tendentious purpose of his present narrowing of the concept here shows itself very soon.

For immediately after undertaking it, Kautsky explains that he cannot stop at this interpretation of Marx's definition of the concept, but rather wants to frame it even more narrowly. Not every radical transformation of the juristic and political superstructure of society signifies a revolution, but rather only "a particular *form* or a *particular method* of transformation" should be understood under it. And then in fact, with reference to the French Revolution, *the conquest of political power by a new class* is portrayed as the relevant characteristic of (social) revolution in contrast to mere reform. *Political* revolution is the relevant characteristic of social revolution. Again a deduction where parts are put in place of the whole, specifically, as Kautsky himself admits, that *form* should determine nature.

Now it is indubitable, so long as there are differences in class, class rights, in fact economic and political privileges at all, that every social revolution is connected with sweeping changes in the *legal status* [*Rechtsstellung*] *of the members of society towards one another*. That is already included in the concept of the epithet *social*, and indeed is so necessarily included that one is justified in saying: where such change does not take place, there can be no question of *social* revolution at all. It also does not prevent us from describing a certain high-point in this change of the legal status of elements in society towards one another as the critical characteristic of social revolution. But to make the concept of social revolution dependent on the *form* and the *methods* of transformation, that is to restrict it in a way that cannot be justified scientifically at all. It also lies—and although this does not by itself yet prove anything, it is noticeable nonetheless—in open contradiction to all explanations given about it hitherto from the social-democratic side.

As long as society is divided into classes, and classes rule over classes, every social revolution will require a *political* revolution, i.e., it will bring hitherto ruled classes to positions of rulership or participation in ruling. I am deliberately adding the latter, because in this point too Kautsky undertakes a scientifically quite unjustified restriction of the concept, in that he makes social revolution dependent on the conquest of state power by a certain previously-oppressed class, which, having attained a ruling position, uses this to transform the entire political and juristic superstructure according to its interests. If that was right, there would hitherto in history have been as good as no social revolutions of a greater scope at all, since, if we disregard the class struggles and transformations in the city-states of

Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which bore a more local character, we will not come across social transformations that led to the exclusive rule of a certain class anywhere in the past. Hitherto, the result was always only a greater or lesser adjustment in the relative power of classes towards one another, so that of course certain hitherto-neglected [*zurückgesetzt*] classes gained pivotal influence, but still had to share political power with other classes. This is the picture that both the great English Revolution of the seventeenth century as well as the great French Revolution of the eighteenth century offer us on closer inspection. Modern history at least knows exclusive rule by a single class no more than it can provide an example for a situation where "politically and economically oppressed" classes suddenly come to rule through a political revolution. Where a class really came to rule, its ascendancy was always preceded by a period in which it was perhaps still a neglected class, but no longer one that was politically and economically oppressed. It is no coincidence that Kautsky in his observations about social revolution ignores this point in older and more recent times. It does not fit into his formula, into which the concept of social revolution must be pressed, in order to let him draw those conclusions for the present day that it is the purpose of his treatise to justify.

So we receive a very narrowed, one-sidedly intensified concept of social revolution, which cannot claim general validity for historical reflection. But does it at least fit the development that lies before us?

Two sections of Kautsky's book, entitled *The Mitigation of Class Contradictions* and *Democracy*, are preoccupied with this question, only phrased in the reverse form. They are supposed to discern whether the coming social revolution is prospectively likely to be carried out in the same abrupt way in which the social revolutions of the past did, according to the determination of concepts Kautsky has undertaken. According to Kautsky, this is in any case the more probable outcome. The elevated public life in the present, the rapidity of economic developments, the growing economic insight in all classes indicate, according to him "already by themselves", that "we cannot slowly hollow out the rule of the exploiting classes, without them becoming aware of this, setting about defending themselves against this, and bringing to bear their entire means of power on suppressing the proletariat as it grows in power and influence." And from the fact that "state power was never as strong as now", it follows that "the more the ruling classes lean on the machinery of the state and abuse these for the purposes of exploitation and

oppression, the more will embitterment against them rise in the proletariat, class hatred grow, and the effort to conquer this state machinery become all the mightier."

Against these deductively derived insights, "one" has raised all manner of objections regarding certain social phenomena in modernity, and these objections are now to be examined, or rather disproven, with reference to what is really going on. With that, he begins his actual "campaign against revisionism".

* * *

As a first counterargument, and as evidence for the growing contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, he deploys the claim that *exploitation* is increasing. "That it is increasing", he says, "Marx has already proven a lifetime ago, and as far as I know no one has yet disproven him." Quite apart from the fact that Marx only proved that the observable fall in the rate of profit *could* be associated with a rising rate of surplus value, this appeal to Marx is already obsolete because what matters is precisely the movement of the exploitation rate in the epoch that has passed since the writing of Marx's *Capital.* Yet here too we are given a statistical proof. That in the years since 1860 nothing has changed in the rate of exploitation, Kautsky tries to prove with reference to the comparative income statistics for England, which the English statistician A. L. Bowley compiled in 1895, and which the reader will find in a somewhat more detailed form than in Kautsky, in R. E. May's rich work about the economy.[4]

According to Bowley's tables, the total wage income in England in millions of pounds sterling amounted in 1860 to 392, and in 1891 to 699; income not derived from wages subject to income tax came in 1860 to 376, and in 1891 to 782. Of the total national income, according to that, the following fell into the category of wage income: in 1860, 47%, and in 1891, 43½%; into that of taxable non-wage income: in 1860, $45\frac{1}{3}$%, and in 1891, 48½%. The rate of income not derived from loans that did not owe income tax remained almost stationary in this time ($7\frac{2}{3}$% to 8%).

Although Bowley's wage statistics are, in Kautsky's view, far too optimistic, he explains that, according to the table, in which labour wages in 1891 amounted to a lower proportion of national income than in 1860, "the rate of surplus value, i.e., the degree of exploitation of the worker, *rose* in the relevant period from 96% to 112%. In fact, according to

Bowley's numbers, the exploitation of even unionised workers grew by at least this much."[5]

Kautsky has already achieved some remarkable things with his interpretation of statistical numbers, but with this he is breaking his own record, so to speak.

We will entirely disregard the fact that Bowley's list also includes *agricultural workers*, who belong to unorganised labour, as is well-known. They have also—aside from wool workers, the massive majority of whom also belongs to the unorganised workers—the *lowest* rate of wage increase, namely only 18%, and thereby help bring down the average rate of wage increase.[6] If one leaves them off the list, even though as a professional group they are in first place going by their number of members, then the result is all the higher an average wage increase for the remaining, i.e., unionised workers. But this is beside the point. Rather, let us assume that Kautsky is right on this point. Does then the demonstrated difference between the rate of increase for the two income groups prove anything at all for a growing rate of exploitation of capital in England?

> But England is becoming ever more a kind of zoological garden of the world. On the one hand, its colonial possessions grow more and more, as does the number of English officials and soldiers of fortune that exploit it and consume their booty in England. But even more grows the number of economic enterprises founded with English capital abroad—banks, trading-houses, factories, railroads—whose leaders and shareholders live in England, and there pocket and consume the surplus value that has been produced outside England. No less grows the quantity of state debts outside England, which have been advanced on loan by English capitalists … In any case, the area of exploitation [*Ausbeutungsgebiet*] (by numbers of population) of British capital is expanding much more rapidly than the British population.

So we read on pages 93–4 of the work *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme* by—Karl Kautsky.[7] At the time, Kautsky was rebutting a childish conception that had been attributed to the author of this piece, although the book in which he is supposed to have found it not only contains absolutely no mention of it, but instead guards against this *explicitly* with the remark that instead of the phrase *national wealth* (of England) one could say in a great number of cases *national surplus product*.[8] Three years ago, Kautsky knew perfectly well that a constantly-increasing fraction of the income of the propertied classes in England

consists of surplus value *not* created in England, so cannot be traced back to the exploitation of English workers. So if he wanted to illustrate the exploitative share of capital in England with reference to English income statistics, then he had to deduct at least this fraction from the total sum of income of the propertied classes. But today, this share—the share of foreign capital counted as part of English surplus value—amounts to *well over 100 million pounds sterling.* In addition, it is not the only part in that sum that does *not* belong in the category of surplus value from English labour, but by itself it is already enough to show how far removed Bowley's numbers are from showing what Kautsky wants to derive from them.

Mind you, here it is not a matter of presenting the situation of English workers in a rosy light, and supporting the whitewashing of economists with vested interests. In general, the exploitation quota of capital is the wrong criterion to measure the *social* exploitation of the working class. It is only a matter of showing how arbitrarily Kautsky juggles with statistics when he is trying to prove statements that he needs for some conception that with him has become a dogma. The statement about the rising rate of exploitation cannot be sustained at all, quite apart from the fact that Marx's schema for the rate of surplus value may well have a use in making more vivid the representation of the economic mode of the capitalist system, but is absolutely unusable as a schema to prove the exploitative relationship in a concrete case without a whole series of modifying intermediary parts. In the work cited previously, I have already gently indicated to Kautsky what wounds he dealt himself at the time in his polemic with the late Dr. Stiebeling, when he attempted to make the theory of surplus value prove something that it does not and cannot prove.[9] But precisely because I gave this indication as conciliatory a form as possible, it seems all the more to have failed in its aim to move Kautsky to reflect on this point.

It is quite different factors than the problematic growth of the rate of exploitation that today burden the working class and stand in the way of the improvement of its situation in relation to the growing wealth of society's productive forces. This lagging-behind of workers' incomes versus the growing actual and potential wealth of society definitely can be conceived as a social relationship of exploitation, and the writer of this piece has also treated it repeatedly in this vein, but one can never derive from this indirect exploitative relationship the necessity of an intensification of the class contradiction.

* * *

Insofar as the movement of the concrete rate of exploitation has an effect on the class struggle, one should rather expect that its increasing intensification is tied to a falling rather than a rising rate of exploitation, because with it the struggle over wages every time threatens to hit the business-owners' vital nerve. Yet here again other factors come into play, which at least in the present day *prevent* the most extreme aggravation of contradictions.

To those of England's industries whose rate of profit is the lowest belongs the *cotton industry*. Its workers have, according to Bowley's list, which is supported in this by all other reports, achieved the greatest increase of their money wages since 1860, namely from 100 to 176 units, an increase that leaves that of the capitalist income rate trailing in its wake *even with* the inclusion of earnings from foreign sources. Kautsky remarks on this sullenly that not for no reason are the cotton workers of England "conservative and the poster-children of all those who dream of 'social peace'", a remark that suggests that it must almost seem desirable for the workers to remain without success in their struggles to raise their wage rate. But Kautsky can calm himself. The English factory owners would probably very gladly exchange their "poster children of social peace" for the revolutionary cotton-spinners on the Continent, since "social peace" in the English cotton industry rests not on the particular subservience of its workers, nor on the fact that these have no reason for dissatisfaction—they have no shortage of such reasons by any means, and the improvement illustrated above is also only relative after all—but rather on the *power their organisation has reached* on the one hand, and on the low level of the rate of profit on the other. The factory owners, because they know the toughness and the resilience of the workers, now only let things come to a strike in the most extreme cases of emergency; the workers, who have a very exact overview of the situation in their industry, and can work out business-owners' profit down to the last farthing, know exactly how far they can go each time with their demands without making the ceasing of production appear in earnest to them as the lesser evil, but up to this point they are also traditionally implacable. This does not apply to all branches to the same degree, since in the cotton industry of England too very different conditions still obtain. The situation of the cotton-spinners is substantially different from that of the weavers; the situation of those who weave finer cloths is very different from that of those who weave simple things. But in

general one can say that here, in the workers' struggle to improve their situation, the resistance of the factory-owners retreats ever more in the face of the pressure of international competition on the one hand and the changes of fashion, etc., on the other—both factors that taking these industries into state ownership would do little to change under today's conditions.[10] In short, the "social peace" in the English cotton industry coincides with an economic state of affairs where the business-owner's rate of profit is forced hard up against the limit of the interest rate for the most secure bonds, i.e., to the theoretical neutral point—whereas abstract logic dictates that the most terrible warfare should actually be raging.

And with that, we have reached another part of Kautsky's deductions. After his efforts in the domain of statistics outlined above, Kautsky moves onto the field of *social psychology*. He examines the psychology of the middle *strata* of society with respect to the tendencies of the working class, and finds there a consistent divergence in two opposing directions. Part of these *strata* (farmers, small business-owners, free occupations) turn ever more towards the workers, others swerve ever more decisively into the capitalist camp, and become ever more hostile to the workers. So where previously indifference or vague sympathy prevailed, now intensification of the contradiction in the vein of the classical contradiction sets in: here capital interest, there workers' interest. Consequently not a mitigation but rather an increase in class contradictions.

That a fragmentation of the middle classes is taking place is undeniable. Only that there is nobody who does not know this, and nobody denies or hushes this up in the socialist camp. But even if such fragmentation is going on, it still does not by any means capture the entirety of these *strata*. There are still considerable remainders left over, numbering into the millions, whose social party position will be oscillating, uncertain, and as the case may be, one of either mediation or betrayal. In a good as well as a bad sense, one will still have to take into account this social-political "liminal population [*Grenzbevölkerung*]". To proleptically deduce them theoretically out of existence is just as scientific as the claim that all the petty bourgeoisie that does not directly join up with Social Democracy is "the bitter enemy of Social Democracy", that with it "the most abrupt aggravation of class contradictions imaginable" is setting in. Everything is ultimately "*imaginable*", but anyone who only somewhat knows this class also knows that—precisely *because* it is a *liminal* class—in it, depending on its various gradations, the greatest differences are on show in the development of their behaviour towards the working class, in line with particular local and

personal conditions. It is worth going into this in more detail at some point, but here let us only mention this fact, which is known to all observers, in order to show the scientific value of a deduction that makes out of petty farmers—whose younger sons today mostly become industrial workers—the most embittered enemies of the working class if they do not immediately completely join Social Democracy.

But even if the fragmentation of the middle *strata* was happening exactly in the way in which Kautsky presents it, then that would always first lead to the *generalisation* and *more acute emphasis* on the *struggle of interests* between the partisans of capitalism and those of the working class. But is this the point wherein "revisionists" diverge from the orthodox Marxists—the *pravomarksisty*, to borrow a Russian term? Not in the slightest. Since even if the former do not share the imaginative notions of the latter regarding the speed and generality of this fragmentation, then still precisely they are the liveliest proponents and sponsors of measures by the working class that, like the spread of consumer cooperatives, help to expedite and generalise the process of fragmentation. So it is entirely erroneous, if not dissimulation, to present matters as if they failed to recognise the importance of this process. The difference lies in a completely different place. If we investigate it, we come across a further logical double-cross by Kautsky, namely the unique way in which he uses the word *intensification* [*Verschärfung*].

* * *

Undoubtedly, economic and social-political struggles today play out with far greater clarity and acuteness than previously. This is down to the nature of developed bourgeois society and the public life that conforms to it. Uncertain urges are replaced by ever more certain, precisely focused demands, and scattergun philanthropy is ousted by calculated social policy. It is thus insofar quite correct to speak of an intensification and a sharpening of the struggles of interest in the present day. But that refers so far only to the *factual* nature of the struggles. Whether that is also connected with an intensification of the *forms* and *methods*, of the *style* and the *weapons* of these struggles is a completely different question. Kautsky's dialectic consists in again and again confusing these two things, offering proof for the first point where in fact it is a matter of providing it for the second. Thereby he naturally makes the matter tremendously easy for himself. For nothing is more transparently visible than the factual sharpening of struggles of

interest in the present day. But once the momentary success of this line of argument has dissipated and we again turn to reality, then we glean a quite different picture then how it should look by Kautsky's reasoning.

In Kautsky's portrayal, there should be the darkest reaction and violation of the working movement everywhere today. Do not the propertied classes still hold power everywhere, is not the power of the state today greater than ever before, and do not these classes see ever more clearly what the various demands and measures of the workers' movement aim to achieve? Precisely from this growing economic *insight* Kautsky deduces the inevitability that the entire powerful means of the ruling classes will be deployed to suppress the proletariat. In fact, however, we see ever more almost the precise opposite taking place. Certainly, there is no shortage of attempts to forcibly suppress the workers' movement, certainly again and again mighty confrontations take place between the political and economic organisations of the workers and the powerful [*machthabend*] classes, certainly we have to reckon again and again with reactionary measures—but anyone who surveys the entire picture of development and has not fully lost their vision for reality cannot and will not possibly fail to notice that the ruling classes, albeit slowly and with occasional interruptions, but still ever more noticeably are retreating step-by-step before the insurgent workers' movement, giving away one powerful means after another, and becoming comfortable with ever further-reaching concessions. Whether that is happening *because of* or *despite* their growing economic insight can remain undiscussed here. Likewise what role the good heart of the bourgeoisie is playing in all of this. It is enough that it is happening, both in the political and the economic domain. All the individual examples that seemingly speak against this, which Kautsky brings up to prove the correctness of his deduction, *do not even come into consideration at all vis-à-vis the entire trajectory of development as a whole*. In addition, he also trims them down to size in a very tendentious way.

Typical for Kautsky's tendentious treatment of the facts is his choice of citations from the prefaces to the new editions of the works by Sidney and Beatrice Webb about British trade unionism.[11] That in these prefaces, extracts of which were published in *Soziale Praxis*, the Webbs remorselessly expose the current deficiencies of trade unionism and acutely identify the dangers that threaten it deserves every recognition. Here they proceed like a doctor who makes a diagnosis and a prognosis, and thereby takes in view all the complications that the case *could* possibly have as a result. But their explications only give certain sides of the picture, and also do not aim

to be understood as anything other than a critique of such phenomena, specifically of ones that are temporary. When, for instance, they talk about an unfavourable change in the mood of the bourgeois public towards the trade unions in England, then it still does not remotely occur to them to conclude from this that the role of the latter has been exhausted or that catastrophic life-or-death confrontations lie before them. They explain this phenomenon on the basis of the changed economic situation in England and the changed conception of economic life, and show at the same time where the way out of the apparent *cul-de-sac* lies.

With Kautsky, the reader only finds out about the former side. He reproduces in bold the statement that public opinion among the propertied classes and those occupying the higher professions is more hostile towards the trade unions and strikes today than it was a lifetime ago.[12] But he says nothing about the fact that, as the Webbs outline immediately after that statement, this hostility is connected with the fact that the conditions of the wage contract are no longer regarded as a purely private affair between business-owner and worker at all, but is primarily directed against the efforts by certain unions—which are also to be repudiated from a socialist perspective as well—to limit production, specifically to halt the progress of machinery, so that

> we have a growing public opinion in favour of some authoritative tribunal of conciliation or arbitration, and an intense dislike of any organised interruption of industry by a *lock-out or strike*.[13]

Their revulsion is directed against *lockouts and strikes*—so it is not a current that is straightforwardly hostile to workers that the Webbs detect, but rather merely one that is opposed to certain forms of industrial struggle. Something totally different than what Kautsky has them say. Likewise they do not fail to observe, in an *addendum* to their arguments about the dangers with which the well-known verdict by the House of Lords about the civil liability of trade unions threatens them, that it is there more a matter of *possibilities* than strong probabilities, and that a good while may yet pass before a serious case of abuse of this verdict in the worst sense takes place.[14] In their eyes, the latter is self-evidently no reason not to push energetically to safeguard the trade unions against these possibilities, but it is a sufficient reason to evaluate this verdict without any hysterical outpourings, and to reject as ludicrous exaggeration the cry that it was dealing the English trade unions a deadly blow.

Only someone who does not know the spirit of the English people and of the English trade unions can join in this cry. The leaders of the English trade unions have their flaws, but they are no idiots. They are just not so weak of nerve to immediately lose their composure as soon as an unfavourable wind blows towards them. They calmly test its strength and introduce measures accordingly. Certainly, they are also subject to deceits, but their vessel is not made of such flimsy stuff and so uncertainly that it immediately keels over at the first blast. The opinion precisely of the most industrious amongst them thoroughly coincides with that of the Webbs, that it would be fundamentally perverse to want to merely overturn the Lords' verdict once again. It contains passages that are to be regarded as indisputable precisely from a socialist perspective.

A whole series of reasons have contributed to the situation that England has had stasis in its domestic politics in recent years. The war that it had to wage in South Africa, which was associated with such colossal sacrifices, further exacerbated this situation. Now it is over, it will soon be seen how ludicrous all the talk of an ethical decline of the English people is, which for so long has been spread on the continent under the influence of leaflets and flyers by Boer sympathisers, which became so fateful for the Boers. According to Kautsky, all that is missing is the remodeling of the army after the Prussian pattern, and England will be completely Prussianised, and one can "study in Germany England's future". That he, who after all wants to be a historian, and who flaunts his historical point of view, did not blanch at writing such a sentence *à la* Ledru-Rollin! England has still put the lie to all the prophecies of decline directed at it, and it will punish these lies as well.

Not that I have overestimated the political distance between Germany and England, or believed that it would continue as it is now; quite the opposite. Just as Germany in its economic development is edging ever closer to England, so too in its political institutions, so in all other respects in which England was hitherto culturally ahead of it—which was famously not the case throughout, but in various points lay the other way around. England's own progress commands this convergence, and is conditioned by it. International trade and international competition have experienced such an increase, and peoples have approximated each other so closely in their trade policy that they become ever more strongly dependent on each other in their economic and social-political development as well. Hence the slowed course of this development in the countries that hitherto were its pioneers. Just as England is gradually losing its monopoly status as the

premier industrial country of the world, so too it is losing its preferential status as a social-political exemplar. There is nothing to mourn in that, for it does not signify an actual retreat, nor any reaction; it is only a natural consequence of the stronger international solidarity of nations, the fact that the others are catching up more quickly. And just as England, when it stops being the premier industrial country of the world, for that reason does not stop for a long time being *one* of its premier industrial countries, so too it will not stop being *one* of the pioneers of social-political progress. That is ensured by its democratic institutions in conjunction with the army of industrial workers that form the majority of its electorate, whose social insight has robustly advanced. There is no doubt in anyone who knows about this that, if in England the party of socialism is still weak, this is simply the case for reasons that are partly rooted in the general history of the country, and partly in the specific history of its Social Democracy, but that the lessons of socialism have found widespread root among the people and its influence makes itself felt in all domains of public life to a rising degree. Especially in the various representative bodies of domestic administration, the working class is already numerously represented today, it forces its way into them in ever greater numbers, and its voice—since England has no special class representation, and no class franchise—has rising influence.

Along with the legend of England's advancing reaction, Kautsky's entire argument for the intensification of class struggles in form and method collapses into untenability. In this respect, it is of the same calibre as were previously the arguments of the anarchists about the uselessness of the general franchise. In fact, Kautsky does not notice at all how far he moves with his argumentation in similar lines of thought as the late Peukert.[15] He burrows about in every nook and cranny to gather together deficiencies that still pertain to democracy—and who would be so foolish as to declare democracy, which mostly has only partly been realised, but is still young in all the leading states of Europe, to be complete?—and wants us to believe that the picture he reaches in this way is the reality. He piles up difficulties upon difficulties for our present work, which partly only exist in his imagination, and partly, where they do appear, are mostly only of a regional and ephemeral character. In this respect, he catastrophises with enormous enthusiasm, and makes claims that absolutely do not stand up to closer scrutiny.

The English workers are no ideal humans, but the picture that Kautsky paints of them at the close of his first piece is immeasurably exaggerated. "Even the latest lashes of their enemies are not able to rouse the

proletarians of England", he writes on page 55, to demonstrate their complete degeneracy. But apart from a few court decisions, whose negative import has additionally not yet been established at all, where are these lashes? And does Kautsky not know that these verdicts have led a whole number of unions to resolve to run workers' candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary election, and to put aside very significant sums for the purpose? Why does he stay silent about what the Webbs have to report about *improvements*? What, for instance, they tell us about the situation of the English Institution of Mechanical Engineers, which despite the setback of 1897–1898 is stronger today than ever before in its number of members and wealth, and to which business-owners only recently again—January 1902—conceded more favourable negotiation conditions, after for the last 4 years all complaints have already been brought before joint committees made up of representatives of the business-owners and workers and are settled there? It reads in the annual report of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers for the last commercial year (1901):

> The peaceful relations with the businessmen and other organisations remained in general uninterrupted, and the difficulties that arose were discussed without recourse to hostilities of a general nature in a sensible way.[16]

That does not look like lashes in any event. But that it is also not the same as obeisant subjection to the will of the business-owner is shown by the passage immediately after this statement, which concerns a case of dispute about an attempt in Leeds to push through a new division of the working day that amounted to a more acute exploitation of labour time without an appropriate shortening of it. There, the Institution declares that it will determinedly and firmly insist that without a shortening of working time they would *not* approve the new work ordinance. At a different point, with regards to international competition, the complaints about it are rejected, and at the end, they reflect on the couple of attacks that have taken place on union associations (Kautsky's "lashes") with satisfaction as a welcome reminder that

> we are citizens of a great free country, and our duties do not end—if one may even say that they begin—with concerning ourselves for the specific interests of our profession … the Institution of Mechanical Engineers will continue not only to be the guardian of the interests of the mechanical engineers, but also an effective factor for the good time that is coming, where a

> general principle of comradeship is recognised in Society, which will secure everyone the full enjoyment of the fruit of their labour.[17]

That does not sound like disarmament and surrender to a rotten peace. Likewise, even the bourgeois social reformers do not understand social peace in the way that Kautsky interprets it, as an idyll of general gentle blissfulness [*Sanftseligkeit*]. Even less, naturally, does his interpretation apply accurately to the socialists whom Kautsky's critique should allegedly so fatally annihilate. No, nobody has spoken here of disarmament, nobody of laying down our weapons, nobody has given themselves over to or nourished the delusion that the working class would attain its goals without constant serious struggle. That is not the question on which the debate has turned and still turns now. For that reason, it is also no more affected by Kautsky's portrayal than Kautsky has provided proof that until the day of the great crash nothing radical can be achieved for socialism. The "fresh wind" that is meant to blow through the "fog of revisionism" from his work, what does this prove itself to be on closer probing? Apart from those parts of his book that develop ideas about whose theoretical foundation there is no dispute among socialists, and which contain many stimulating passages, it offers nothing but tendentiously-disjointed and eccentric representations of reality, so that we can only reply to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*: "Wind"? Quite possibly. But a wind whose enlightening power, as the popular expression goes, is really only that of a blowhard [*es windig steht*].

II

We have devoted too much space to the first piece to be able to concern ourselves in detail with the second one as well. It can be described *en bref* by saying that where the first paints in black, the second takes on all the more strongly a rosy hue. If the difficulties of social reform pile up to a tremendous degree up until the great crash—the conquest of state power by the proletariat—then after it they are solved all the more effortlessly. Anyone who does not believe this is derided as a luckless fool [*Unglücksrabe*] and similar. Now it is correct that, if in the tasks of the future no other questions are at stake than those that Kautsky presents, the matter would be sorted easily enough. Yet that is not the case. Not the question of *power* nor the question of economy on the side of *property* defines the problem of a future socialist society, but rather the problem of economy as a

problem of administration. It is now characteristic how flightily Kautsky sweeps past precisely this problem, which is the crux of the questions to be discussed. He hardly even so much as meagrely grazes it. And yet ultimately *everything* depends on it: the problem of *production* as well as that of *distribution*, that of the *scope* as well as the *degree* of the socialisation of the economic foundations of societal life. His neglect makes all his further reflections worthless, a pure utopia in the worst sense of the word. Since this above all is one of the main weaknesses of utopianism: that the utopian, for the sake of certain favourite ideas, either wrongly evaluates or entirely ignores significant factors, whether of development, or of societal life on a given basis.

One cannot object that the humans of the future will already know how to solve their problems of administration themselves at every stage of development. It is quite certain that they will. Humans have at all times known how to arrange themselves for better or worse. But so much is certain, that this arrangement will happen all more easily the more development itself takes place gradually, the more its course becomes continuous instead of taking place by erratic leaps and bounds.

Kautsky makes all manner of observations about the theories of catastrophe, of development, and of mutation formulated by natural researchers, and connects them with the theories of societal development that belong to the currents of certain classes and certain times. But he must himself admit that not much comes out of these analogies, that they always lead one to stray into false conclusions. One proceeds the most surely when one examines every problem of societal development on the basis of its own fundamental conditions. And there one thing is clear: The more societal conditions worsen and intensify *before* the "day of the revolution" in the vein in which Kautsky seeks to show in his first piece, the more difficult becomes the task to be solved "on the day after", the more problematic becomes its fruitful solution. To turn it around, the more has already been achieved on this side in accordance with this solution, the more relaxed we can be about what will happen afterwards. And for that reason, we want to hold fast to the idea that the path which the working class sees before it does not lead downwards into some abyss, where only a catastrophic leap will save it anymore, but rather leads ever *upwards*, even if by arduous paths. *Forwards and upwards*—all the signs of the time indicate, and all the interests of a healthy development command, that we must do our part to ensure that we stick to *this* watchword, undeterred by momentary appearances of reaction.

Hence the heightened significance of democracy in the present day. To the degree that the working class matures, democracy turns from a mere means to prepare it for social revolution, which is how Kautsky sees it, into a powerful factor of uninterrupted social progress. We have seen how even the most favourable example of our time that Kautsky could provide for his thesis, namely England, fails on closer inspection. The way things are going in France, in Italy, in the North Sea states, punish the pessimism of his more decided lies about "the world Before [*Diesseits*]". Only Germany, or more correctly Northern Germany, seems to bear out his position.

But here, apparently, we stand before a decisive turning-point. It is marked on the one side by the struggle against *trade-policy reaction*, and on the other by the *struggle against the three-class franchise in Prussia*, which has now become ripe for a decision, and is not to be delayed any longer. In Germany, it depends especially on the outcome of the latter struggle whether we are necessarily steering towards a catastrophic development or not. The decision here lies with our opponents. For in the social-democratic camp, *nobody* is so doctrinaire as to forgo this important present struggle for the sake of certain views regarding the future. Social Democracy has unanimously taken it up, and will in the first instance also have to lead it. But finally the signs are also multiplying that in the bourgeois-liberal camp they can no longer tolerate an electoral system in which today Junker-bureaucratic reaction defends its strongest bulwark. We do not want to overestimate these signs, but it would be a mistake to underestimate them.

So much on this subject at this point. We plan to go into certain tactical questions of this struggle in a separate article.

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—Karl Kautsky: *Social Revolution: I. Social Reform and Social Revolution. II. On the Day After the Social Revolution*. Berlin 1902. Publisher: Expedition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts.]
2. [Ed. B.—*Leipziger Volkszeitung* of 5 July 1902.]
3. Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Part One', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 29: Marx 1857–61* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 263.
4. [Ed. B.—cf. R. E. May, *The Economy in the Past, Present, and Future*, p. 39.] Arthur Lyon Bowley (1869–1957), English economic statistician, pioneer of sampling techniques in social surveys.

5. [Ed. B.—Karl Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, I., p. 24.]
6. [Ed. B.—Of the 300,000 wool workers in England, in 1898 only a mere 7000 were organised.]
7. Karl Kautsky, *Bernstein und das Sozialdemokratische Programm: Eine Antikritik* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz, 1899).
8. [Ed. B.—cf. my work *The Preconditions of Socialism*, p. 49. It could hardly be pointed out any more clearly that I did not dream of deriving the increase in the number of property-owners in England purely from England's capitalist production. But that did not prevent Kautsky at the time from ignoring that statement and carrying out his rebuttal as if I had claimed something of that kind.] Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, Henry Tudor (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 59–60.
9. [Ed. B.—cf. *op. cit*., pp. 180–1.] Bernstein, *Preconditions of Socialism*, p. 202. Johann Georg Christian Stiebeling (1830–1895), German-American doctor and socialist, formulated critical analyses of natural-scientific methods, Darwinism, and the Marxian theory of value.
10. [Ed. B.—Incidentally, no industry is less suited to nationalisation than most branches of weaving, as the limited spread of joint-stock companies among them shows.]
11. Martha Beatrice Webb (1858–1943) and Sidney James Webb (1859–1947), English socialists, social scientists, and social reformers, prominent members of the Fabian Society and Labour Party, theorists of industrial democracy, in 1895 founders alongside George Bernard Shaw and Graham Wallas of the London School of Economics, later defenders of Stalinist repression in the USSR.
12. [Ed. B.—In English: professional. The translation of this word in *Soziale Praxis* as *berufstätig* [in employment] is misleading. The factory-owner or grocer *simpliciter* is no professional man, but the judge, doctor, high-school teacher, etc., certainly are.]
13. Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902 [1897]), p. xxvii.
14. Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907 [1894]), pp. xxi–xxiii.
15. Josef Peukert (1855–1910), Bohemian-Austrian journalist, trade unionist, and anarcho-communist activist, editor of *Die Zukunft* (1881–1884), *Der Rebell* (1881–1886), and *Die Autonomie* (1886–1893), and co-editor of *Der Anarchist* (1889–1895).
16. Institution of Mechanical Engineers, *Annual Report* (London: IMechE, 1901).
17. Ibid.

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CHAPTER 27

Parties and Classes

Sozialistische Monatshefte 8(11) (November 1902), pp. 850–8.

How far do political parties align with social classes? This question is not only of academic interest; clarifying it is also of great practical significance. For closely tied to it, and only to be answered on its basis, is another question whose immediate relationship to the practical struggles stands out straightaway. Namely: what can one expect from the various political parties in relation to questions that touch class interests more deeply, or what power does class interest have over the party?

If one leaves aside Social Democracy, which openly displays its character as a class party with the keenest markedness, then there is today no political party that in its name describes itself as the specific representative of some societal class. Conservative Party, Reich Party, *Zentrum* [Centre Party], National-Liberal Party, Free-Minded Party [*freisinnige Partei*], People's Party [*Volkspartei*]—everywhere in their names their relationship to certain classes in the population is erased. At best, one could still see in the name People's Party a class description, but the representatives of this party too, in particular its North German wing, the Free-Minded People's Party, are very careful to stress in their programmatic declarations that they *are not* a class party.[1] It does not come to their notice that with this repudiation they also rob the word people [*Volk*] in their name of any determinant character, of any indicative value. If the word *people* ceases to denote a class delineation, then Bismarck could in his time rightly say to the Liberals: "I am the people too!"

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Now certainly, in its social stratification [*Schichtung*], no political party exclusively comprises members of a certain societal class. Even Social Democracy makes no exception in this respect, as is well-known, since it grants members of all societal *strata* room in its ranks. Only that Social Democracy avowedly examines and treats the questions of public life that confront it from the perspectival angle of a very specific societal class, which the other parties claim not to do.

In contrast to Social Democracy, the other parties insist that they address public affairs from the perspective of no particular *class*, but rather certain political *principles*. But these political principles are all the more uncertain the less they are concerned with particular societal classes, i.e., are understood in their vein, and hence the same party name in different countries or in the same country at different times has meant and can mean something quite different.

However, as uncertain as these principles may also be, and however much the non-socialist parties also claim, and some of them even want to believe, that they are free of class spirit, in fact it turns out that in each of these parties respectively the spirit of certain classes or *strata* of society predominates, which determines their stance towards the questions of the time. On the socialist side, the non-social-democratic parties are frequently summarily described as the *bourgeois* parties, whereby bourgeois does not say much more than *non-proletarian*. In this sense at least, the description as a collective term is fully justified, and is scientifically unchallengeable. If it is supposed to say more, then on the contrary it will lose its justification the more the concept of "bourgeois" is precisely delimited as a class description. Since our modern economic life is so *embourgeoisé* that income from immediate personal servitude no longer exists, then one can from this perspective present even the noble major landowner as just as bourgeois as the industrial business-owner. But in the political-social stratification they lie in different places, and as the case may be raise different claims to legislation than each other or than the petty bourgeois [*Kleinbürger*], who after all in the aforementioned great divide also belongs to the "bourgeois".

And famously it is the same with the behaviour of the various *strata* of the bourgeois world towards the demands of the workers.

If, from the perspective of the great class divide, all of these *strata* are reactionary vis-à-vis the working class, in the sense that they have no truck with the political rule of the working class and their ultimate socialist goals, then this reactionarism is graduated with some of their individual

members to the degree that they are themselves interested in the progress of society. Progress is a term that is open to many different readings [*deutungsfähig*], and so it will be expedient to give it a precise definition from the outset. Progress means further development in the direction of a given goal, and the objectively given goal of societal development is and must be to bring about the highest possible general state of well-being through the highest possible unfolding and the most harmonious possible cooperation [*Zusammenwirken*] of all the economic and intellectual forces of society. One can argue over the means to reach this goal and about the forms of its realisation, one can out of any subjective motives (class interest, romantic inclinations, philosophical ideologies) behave passively or even with hostility towards it, but one cannot deny it. For it coincides with the conditions that are connected with the concept of perfection [*Vervollkommnung*] in general. Every organism is all the more perfect the more the forces present within it reach their unfolding and harmonious activity, and the natural goal of every organism is the attainment of this perfectibility [*Vollkommenheit*] and the way of life [*Lebensgestaltung*] appropriate to it.

Now famously, the various classes of society are in fact very differently disposed towards social progress in this sense. The class of wage-labourers can foster their progress today in no way at all other than by working towards the material and intellectual preconditions of general societal progress. Whatever restricts these also damages them, and between its demands and their interest there is complete congruency. Yet with other classes this interest is a divided one. They have their lesser or greater *reservations* to make towards progress, which in each individual case are determined by their particular conditions of survival, and where to this condition of existence belongs the atrophying of a part of society and its forces, these rise to the point of overwhelming *opposition to it*. On this latter standpoint stand today certain *strata* of the lower middle class [*Kleinbürgertum*] and the class of landowners, whereas the interest of the industrial and commercial middle class in societal progress, which was once so strong, has tailed away variously to tepidness, passivity, or disinclination, to such an extent that they have lost their moral and political power over the working class. With all that, however, the classes that fall into this category cannot flourish without the continuation of economic forward development, and so at least a great part of their members must in the deciding moments again and again come down on the side of parties that fight for social progress in one way or another.

It is a very obvious conclusion that, the weaker or more uncertain class interest is among members of a class, ideology or mood has an all the greater room for manoeuvre. We find this confirmed if we move from looking at classes to looking at *parties*.

* * *

Today it is only some sections of society whose political behaviour is determined from the outset and throughout by the class they belong to. Anyone who assumes this about the general public is confusing class with caste, the class state with the estatist state [*Ständestaat*] or the Oriental caste system. Caste and estate were something very specific or concrete that immediately imposed themselves on the spirits of their members, but class is something fairly abstract, whose precise nature is only recognised and grasped obliquely. For the member of an estate—we may ignore caste here—so far as they were even allowed to have any political say at all, political representation of their interests was only possible through the delegates of their own estate, but the enfranchised member of a class in modern society can, where modern constitutionalism exists, choose to be represented politically by whomever they like. The estatist delegate only represented the fellow-members of their estate, while the modern deputy is elected by members of all classes and in the relative power of their vote is supposed to represent the whole community. Accordingly, the programmes of all the political parties that do not—as in Germany the Poles, the Welfs, and the Danes—serve particular protest movements reach beyond the special affairs of particular classes, and describe in more or less detail the *principles* according to which *the entire community together* is to be led or administered.

Already for this reason, a full congruence between parties and classes is ruled out today. No party turns in elections exclusively to members of a single class, all of them canvass votes not only from the classes in which they find their main support but also from other classes—not just because individuals are free to rise above the specific interests of their classes, but also because of the aforementioned comprehensive character of their party programmes. Just as every individual member of modern communities has, besides the special interests that are distinct from those of other members, a number of interests that coincide with those of other members, so too with classes. And for that reason even the programme of a party that represents a very particular class interest can still exert attraction on

members of other classes. The party is in its entire conception and nature something that reaches further than the class.

However, even classes today are not rigidly closed off, and their boundaries are anything but strictly demarcated. Although purely superficially, occupational statistics together with income statistics allow us to determine in general outlines the relative size of classes compared with one another, no income statistics and no occupational statistics can precisely determine the borders of the actual class divide, because precisely in these border regions countless connecting threads between the various elements run from one side to the other, and in one way or another modify the social sensibility that after all also plays a role in this. The closer this border is, the more uncertain this sensibility becomes. Hence we find here wage-labourers who live in petty-bourgeois conditions and have the appropriate sentiments, and there lower middle classes who feel thoroughly proletarian, and so on. Further, a great influence is exerted by the general currents of time, for which besides the economic dynamics of classes their political dynamics, the influence they wield by means of political institutions, also carries a lot of weight. Religious or nationalistic traditions, and entrenched customs supported by climatic particularities, can also modify this feeling in one direction or another.

Under impressions of all kinds, an individual can raise themselves above the interests of their class up to the point of complete class denial [*Klassenverleugnung*], and if these cases are also not very common, then still in our time of heightened public life there is no shortage of forces that work towards dulling class sensibility [*Klassenempfinden*]. To this belongs, besides the circumstance that the class structure today in many places is in the process of strong realignment, precisely the development of the modern party system.

As soon as it has come into existence, every body also develops its own needs and its own vital interests. So where the vital interest of the party is not—as in Social Democracy, though in this respect it is an exception—so tightly intertwined with the vital interests of the class it represents that the party must foster the latter if it wants to foster itself, then contradictions again and again arise between the interest of the party and that of the class it supposedly represents. One only needs to go through the history of the various centrist parties [*Mittelparteien*] of modern times, and one will find countless examples for this. Sometimes the party suffers under the pressure that the class exerts on it through certain organs or through desertion, but sometimes the party sacrifices the interests of the relevant class to

its need for self-assertion. It is hence by no means correct to portray the behaviour of parties every time as the product of the sentiment of the classes in question. Class spirit is, as we have seen, something fairly uncertain, it works usually more like a dull instinct than a clearly-recognised interest, for classes and economic interest-groups are two separate things. This is shown precisely today in the era of the great economic interest associations. We see there associations of very different characters emerging from the same class with very divergent, if not opposing aspirations—the League of Industrialists [*Bund der Industriellen*] and the Industrial Association [*Industrieverband*], the Agrarian League [*Bund der Landwirte*] and the Northeastern Farmers' Association [*Bauernverband Nordost*], etc.[2]

How elastic this class system is, one can see if one compares the political behaviour of the same classes in different countries with one another. Certainly, to the extent that the economic structure of each society resembles that of the others, matching fundamental types will emerge everywhere. The capitalist industrial boss in England is as intent as in Germany or in Russia to make as much profit as possible and to keep "discipline" in the factory, but as a politician and in personal interaction the Englishman can still despite this be quite differently disposed towards the workers than their German or Russian class counterpart. Pretty much around the same time where in the most industrialised state of Germany, in Saxony, they were robbing the workers of their right to vote, in England they were doing away with class privileges in municipal administration, and a parliamentary electoral reform was tabled by the dominant bourgeois parties that promised to improve the English franchise, which even today is only a little less favourable for the worker than the German Reichstag franchise, far beyond it. While at some points in modern society the middle class sold its soul to the Church out of fear of social revolution, at other points it wages a *Kulturkampf* against the Church in alliance with the socialist workers.

How great the power that economic interest has over people's temperaments is long since well-known to humanity, and that cordiality ceases at least in matters of money the old Hanseatic trader already knew very well. Thus one says nothing new by pointing to economic questions as the motive questions of politics. But greater insight than this is needed to correctly evaluate the political nature of classes and the relationship between party and class.

If the misrecognition of the economic nature of classes and the class nature of political parties leads to deceptions about the latter's efficacy and

reliability, then on the other hand the exaggeration of these relationships can lead to a misrecognition of the influence and the possibilities of political parties and their leaders.

No more than a human being is the will-less tool of circumstances, are parties and their leaders the submissive tools of class instincts.

The fundamental stance of a party towards the great economic questions of the time is in the last instance determined by its social composition; but whether in this it behaves pettily or broad-mindedly, in a blinkered or a farsighted way, depends to a large degree on the leadership it possesses, and the spirit in which it is led.

Let us take an example! The writer of this piece knows that he is free of any personal prejudice against the current leaders of the bourgeois left in Germany. I consider Herr Eugen Richter to be in many respects a capable man and in his own manner an independent character.[3] But it is my firm conviction that the pitifulness and the unreliability of the left wing of German liberalism is not simply to be traced back to the natural class spirit of its following, but rather that Richter's leadership also carries a large part of the blame for it. Not for nothing does one saturate a party for decades with the spirit of pettiest carping towards a world-historical movement like the social emancipation struggle of the working class. In this point, German liberalism is the victim of inadequate political leadership. A party leader can and must ultimately unfold greater capability than Richter has shown, which exhausts itself in the virtues that one demands of a competent section leader [*Abteilungschef*]. In party life too there is bureaucratism, and Richter is in his policy the archetype of a true bureaucrat. The petty, most immediate sectional interest dominates him so completely that for a long time he faced the great, world-moving questions and developments of modernity entirely without comprehension, and even today still betrays little understanding of them. I do not know whether Richter today has finally emancipated himself from that narrow-minded perspective that only sees in the developmental drive of the modern working class an artificially created current *du jour* that is to be fought with dismissive criticism. But with Richter one will still look in vain for great perspective in his evaluation of Social Democracy, such as, e.g., even a Bennigsen in his time let shine through in the consultation over the Anti-Socialist Law.[4] Since the days where he warned the philistines of the sixth Berlin constituency of the prospect of complete immiseration within only a few years in case the unheard-of happened and the social democrat was elected, Richter's critique has always continued to aim at portraying spectres. And so too the

slogans that Richter gave his troops to take along with them in their campaign against Social Democracy evaporated without any effect when faced with it, but acted like poison on their own audience, and also taught the bourgeois followers of German Free-Mindedness, who already never suffered from an excess of political momentum, the line of thinking that led the majority of them still to vote in runoff elections in line with the famous motto: Better Lucius than Kapell![5]

It would be vulgar to hold Eugen Richter solely responsible for that. Other forces also work in the same direction, not least the line of reasoning that lies closest to class instinct. The political education of the bourgeois left in Germany—except for certain isolated areas—also left much to be desired in the pre-Richter era. But if one assumes that, in the quarter-century since Richter first became leader of the bourgeois left, another man had stood at the head of this party, a man perhaps with somewhat less of a mind for arithmetical details, but with the same energy and quick-wittedness as Richter, and in addition a horizon that is as wide as Richter's is narrow—does one not believe that under such a leader there would be quite a few things different about German Free-Mindedness? One only needs to cast a glance at other countries to be persuaded that it is at least a *possibility*. How far did not in his time a *Disraeli* know how to tear out the old blinkered Torydom, or a *Gladstone* the Whiggish-coloured liberalism, beyond traditional class politics! Now those were real leaders! Class sensibility does not let itself be disputed out of existence, as far as the greater masses of a class are concerned, but it is capable of great modification. It can be taught, both in a good sense as well as a bad one, and in fact it is strongly taught today. The entirety of modern party life is a constant process of party and class reciprocally working on one another, wherein the parties are conventionally the active element. Classes only mobilise themselves as a rule for the sake of greater interests. But parties, which have to fight a constant running battle, occasionally call up the class or classes standing behind them for the tiniest trifles. In this respect, party life, which is otherwise still thoroughly necessary and beneficial, often exercises anything but a favourable effect. The party contaminates the class, and it depends on the spirit of the party and its leadership whether the result is a narrowing or a broadening of the class horizon.

So it is thoroughly wrong to describe the conduct of political parties simply as the necessary result of the class composition of these parties. Anyone who knows only a little of the history of the party system in the nineteenth century also knows how often such verdicts have been exposed

by history, by the fact that the same classes on later occasions acted quite differently than they did earlier. But here it is not just a matter of questions that belong to history.

* * *

For the tactics of Social Democracy, insofar as it is not set fast in principle by its fundamental conception of the working class's struggle in modern society, it is generally accepted that a correct assessment of the opposing parties is of the greatest importance. Every deception, be it through excessive optimism or exaggerated pessimism, can become the cause of missteps, mistakes by omission, and the like. Hence the reprehensibility of phrases that, like the statement about "a reactionary mass" that was so sharply challenged by Marx and Engels, express the grain of truth that they contain in such a form that it can become the source of the most fateful errors.[6]

In his Munich speech about the upcoming Reichstag elections, which illuminated so brightly his eminent political keenness of vision, Bebel explained, *inter alia*, how he himself actually regretted that bourgeois liberalism in Germany had collapsed so much, and that in Germany we could still do with a party that acted, so to speak, as a buffer between the parties of reaction. This remark from the mouth of one of the political leaders of the party, if not *the* most radical one, rebuts a certain ultra-radicalism, which one frequently finds among socialists who live in a bourgeois life situation outside the political struggle, and whose urgent goal seems to be the complete wearing-away of the bourgeois left. In fact, a glance at the statistics for occupational and income classes shows that in the German Reich there is still room for a bourgeois-radical party; however, such a party, if it is to be worth its salt, must content itself with playing second fiddle to Social Democracy, and see not an insult but an honour in being the "preceding crop [*Vorfrucht*] for Social Democracy". For the liberalism of the politician who does not acknowledge that the future belongs and is owed to socialism, does not pass the test.

To educate the more radically-minded elements of the bourgeois classes to such a view would be, or rather is, the task of truly liberal leadership today. The claim to political leadership legitimates itself above all by the fact that one is intellectually superior to the mass of those who are to be led, or rather, that one has in one's comparative favour a keener view for what is to come, and sees matters from a higher vantage-point than the

average member of the party. Yet it has been the misfortune of bourgeois liberalism in Germany that, as Lassalle once aptly observed, its leaders saw their ambition in not overstepping the political *niveau* of the average philistine.

If things stay like this, then there can also be no thought of any noteworthy strengthening of bourgeois liberalism in Germany. Even a political constellation that is as favourable from the outset as the present one will not give it a leg up in the right direction. Only if the struggle whose central focus is the question of tariffs is brought to the awareness of the people in all its principled significance, and is fought out in this vein, can the current conjuncture turn out well not only for Social Democracy but also the bourgeois left. Even Eugen Richter probably no longer dreams of the possibility of alienating the workers from Social Democracy, so it is a matter of the capacity to unfold its canvassing strength among those elements of the population that today follow the conservative-clerical parties and their allies. But this canvassing strength is not achieved through compliance, but rather through astute bearing in that direction, by raising the struggle to the level of a dispute about worldviews. Only by emphasising major considerations can one pull the vacillating elements towards and along with oneself.

Is such a proceeding still to be expected of German Free-Mindedness? Although here and there within its ranks the recognition seems to be breaking through that more than any other party precisely it needs to undergo a thorough revision in its political views and methods, up to now in general it does not look like this is going to happen. After all, the writer of this piece still had to witness during the spring election campaign in Breslau that the candidate for this party, which describes itself as democratic, saw fit in his party's voter gathering without any urgent reason to praise the advantages of the Hohenzollern monarchy over the Republic, as this exists in France and the United States, and to emphasise in a raised voice that his party stood on the basis of the constitution and cleaved to it. Now in Germany, or rather in Prussia, the question of monarchy versus republic is at the moment so irrelevant that there is no point in discussing it more widely here. But it should at least be remarked that, as even a bourgeois democrat should have had to tell themselves, the monarchy in Prussia is tightly intertwined with institutions that fly in the face of even the most modest claims of democratic constitutionalism, and that it is already to half sell out one's own cause if, instead of presenting these things merely as a temporarily unalterable fact, one also expressly gives

them one's blessing. The Prussian constitution was violently foisted on the country after the defeat of democracy, and for a long time was not recognised by democrats—notably: by Bourgeois Democracy. Ultimately, even the democrats resigned themselves to it, but it contains provisions—one should think of the institution of the *Herrenhaus*—that as a democrat, even if one accepts them as facts, one still fundamentally cannot possibly endorse. But if, skating over all of these things, one sings the praises of the monarchy to the voters, then one should not be surprised if they either vote "lock, stock, and barrel" as royalists, or only take a moderate interest in the party's campaign. As it turned out, the bourgeois voters also left this Free-Minded candidate abjectly in the lurch.

On the other hand, it should once again be remembered that it is a deputy of the *Free-Minded People's Party* who at the latest Cooperatives' Conference [*Genossenschaftstag*], as the saviour of the middle class, had the workers' consumer associations be jockeyed out of the Cooperatives' Association [*Genossenschaftsverband*] by a compliant majority, and that the first leader of this party endorsed this *coup de main*. Both the justification and the execution of this *coup* are impossible to square with a timely conception of the tasks of democracy. Farther-sighted liberals have also realised this and openly expressed it. Saving the middle class at the cost of more expedient economic organisation, and ostracising democracy from the consumer associations are not to be squared with a decisively liberal policy in the state. When some years ago, Lord Rosebery, the leader of the English Liberals, who after all also substantially lie on the bourgeois side, had to decide in a dispute between the shopkeepers' association and the workers' consumer cooperatives, he did not hesitate at all to side with the latter.[7] And Lord Rosebery is by no means a representative of the radical tone in the Liberal camp.

So there is still much missing before one could harbour justified expectations for a sweeping transformation in the political behaviour of German Free-Mindedness. At times, one explains or excuses its stagnancy [*Flauheit*] by pointing to the limpness and *ennui* of the bourgeois classes that stand behind it and have already repeatedly left the party in the lurch. Certainly, the German bourgeoisie has politically gone entirely to pot. But that is only half the picture, if one explains the party's stagnancy with the stagnancy of the class. In no small part, rather, the stagnancy of the class is the effect of decades-long sins by the party. Clarifying this is necessary precisely in the present moment, where in German politics questions are on the agenda whose fruitful treatment by the opposition requires the leading

minds of all the parties involved to possess two qualities above all: a courageous heart, and a wide gaze.

Notes

1. The Free-Minded People's Party [*Freisinnige Volkspartei*] was a progressive liberal party, formed in 1893 as a result of a split over Reich Chancellor Leo von Caprivi's proposed military reforms in the German Free-Minded Party [*Deutsche Freisinnige Partei*]. The latter was itself the product in 1884 of a short-lived union between the former German Progress Party [*Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*] (founded 1861) and the Liberal Union [*Liberale Vereinigung*] (founded 1880), which comprised anti-protectionist defectors from the National-Liberal Party. In 1910, the Free-Minded People's Party fused with the other side in the 1893 split, the Free-Minded Union [*Freisinnige Vereinigung*], and the older German People's Party [*Deutsche Volkspartei*] (founded 1868) into the Progressive People's Party [*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei*], the forerunner of the Weimar-era German Democratic Party [*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*]. These frequent splits and reconfigurations all contributed to the general doubts within Social Democracy about the reliability of liberal progressives in achieving meaningful social reforms.
2. The League of Industrialists (founded 1895) and Agrarian League (founded 1893) were overarching economic advocacy groups and direct rivals, whereas the many Industrial and Farmers' Associations were (respectively) sector-specific and regional interest groups.
3. Eugen Richter (1838–1906), German social-liberal lawyer and politician, dominant figure within the Free-Minded People's Party, ardent supporter of free trade, a market economy, and a *Rechtsstaat*, and vitriolic opponent of Social Democracy as well as all forms of state intervention.
4. Karl Wilhelm Rudolf von Bennigsen (1824–1902), German liberal politician, collaborated with Bismarck in the reform of the North German Confederation and helped found the National-Liberal Party, in 1878 was instrumental in bringing about the rejection of Bismarck's first Anti-Socialist Bill.
5. A then-famous saying by Eugen Richter in 1877, which in effect meant "rather a conservative than a social democrat".
6. [Ed. B.—With this, it goes similarly to how it is with the slogan of the imminent collapse of the present societal order, the simplistic interpretation of which the evil "revisionism" has confronted, at least ensuring that it has entirely vanished from the agenda today. In the face of the tendency, which is rather strong in some people, to insinuate that the socialists whom one describes as revisionists harbour intentions and views that they have never

stood for, in order to impute to them a theoretical defeat of which there is not even really a trace—it was not among the revisionists that the people who discounted the farmers and middle classes were to be found—it becomes entirely unavoidable to point out what this dispute really turned on. For instance, the immediate purpose of challenging the theory of collapse was in fact achieved. Only in Munich was the attempt to dragoon the party into a false radicalism on the question of working time legislation again decisively rejected.

One should further read what the author of this piece wrote at the time about the tactics of the English workers after the defeat of Chartism—printed in *On the History and Theory of Socialism*, p. 299ff.—in particular what I said there about the effects of the "*political demoralisation*" of the English workers, and then judge what degree of courage was required to present the matter as if someone or other from the revisionists' camp had wanted to talk the German workers into imitating the policy of the English workers at the time!

In a Berlin meeting, in which lectures were held about the Munich party conference, a speaker claimed that the dispute between revisionism and Marxism had been decided in favour of the latter. That gives the impression that the revisionists had aimed to topple the entire theoretical edifice of Marx and Engels, which in fact was so little the case that, at the time, their opponents coined for them the derisive nickname *the true Marxists* [*wahre Marxisten*]. Only one thing is proved by juxtapositions like that, in which the real object of dispute is hidden from view: the feeling of inner weakness among those who make use of them.]

7. Archibald Philip Primrose, Earl of Rosebery (1847–1929), British liberal politician, briefly Prime Minister (1894–1895), leader of the Imperialist faction within the Liberal Party, supporter of social reform but opponent of socialism.

CHAPTER 28

Socialism and Liberalism in the Prussian *Landtag* Elections

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In accordance with various party congress resolutions, as well as the resolutions of special conferences by the social democrats in Prussia, our comrades in the leading state of the German Reich have everywhere thrown themselves energetically into the election campaign. It can be expected—indeed we may safely presume—that the day of the elections will above all turn out to be an impressive demonstration in favour of the fundamental principles and demands of Social Democracy. It will bring a mighty onslaught against the great number of backwardnesses of all kinds that have hitherto found their strongest bulwark in the Prussian *Landtag*. The socialistically-minded working class of Prussia will for the first time make this bulwark tremble, whose foundation is the defensive wall of the three-class franchise [*Dreiklassenwahlsystem*], with a united voice, and hopefully in various places it will make thorough breaches in it. Already by its mere participation in the election it will in various localities make clear to the dullest eye the worthlessness of the electoral system. A system that is calculated in such a way as *not* to be exercised by the mass of the voters, which cannot even *handle* the participation of all voters at all, is damned in itself.

If showing a matter to be nonsensical is to prove fatal to it, this cannot stop at theoretical discussion, but must be delivered in *practice*, must be demonstrated *tangibly*. The social-democratic working class will take care of bringing about as far as possible the level of voting participation that

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must be the precondition of any tolerably decent electoral system, but one that under this electoral system will fly in the face of the intention of its creators and defenders. The stronger our turnout in the vote, the more the act of voting will in itself already become a protest against the electoral system.

Besides exposing the worthlessness of the entire system, however, the wall is breached by the mere fact that the election of social democrats into the *Landtag* is achieved at all—one of the main tasks of the *Landtag* election campaign.

Here and there, remarks have been made to the effect that the entry of social democrats into the *Landtag* could be used by the defenders of the present *Landtag* electoral system as proof that it is not yet so degenerate as it is presented by Social Democracy after all. It is possible that, as the case may be, people might try to gloss over the continued preservation of the system with such turns of phrase. But there is not the slightest reason to pay any notice to them. If the removal of rotten institutions depended on whether some reasons or other could still be whipped up in favour of their continued existence, then there would be no progress in the world whatsoever. There is no infamy that could not also be presented as having its favourable sides.

It would be something else if one could expect that pushing through some social-democratic deputies might weaken the working class's opposition to the present *Landtag* electoral system. But there can be no question of that at all. With that, this system can only lose. Public opinion had almost already got used to the fact that Social Democracy was not represented in the Prussian *Landtag* at all, and the soporific power of habit is so great that even the most rabid among us did not even get worked up about this anymore. But if after Social Democracy's intensive participation in the election, the over 1½ million social-democratic Reichstag voters in Prussia remained without any representation in the *Landtag* that bore any relationship whatsoever to their numerical strength, if it will have been shown—as it inevitably must be—what ludicrous coincidences and crying injustices the outcome of the election depends on here, then that can do nothing other than raise outrage about the electoral system, or awaken this where it is not yet felt. The phrase that appetite comes with eating is also true in politics. In the struggle for political relevance, the need for political rights grows; once Social Democracy has a number of deputies in the *Landtag* at all, then it will feel and be able to prove all the more keenly

the necessity for removing an electoral system that makes it impossible for it to have the appropriate representation.

But will we get some deputies through in this election, and how many?

It is quite hopeful that at least in some constituencies Social Democracy will succeed in returning deputies entirely under its own steam. Nevertheless, the number is only small, since a quite specific composition of taxpayers is needed to give it overwhelming weight in the second-class voters too—which is necessary for a victory by Social Democracy. Yet even if it may only be a few constituencies that we take by ourselves, so all the same each individual victory like that has a claim to great significance. With it, a highly effective breach is made in the fortified wall of the parliament of the propertied classes, with it a strong current of social-democratic critique is introduced to let some air into the stifling atmosphere of that parliament, which will whistle, sometimes even rumbustiously, around the ears of the leading minds there, and prove to have a clarifying and startling effect among the people too. The more deputies Social Democracy gets into the parliament by its own strength, the more independent its representation in the *Landtag* will in turn thereby become from the liberal-democratic bourgeois left, and taking that into consideration too—where there is any hope at all of winning a constituency without outside help—no effort must be spared to bring about this result.

We have seen that the Free-Minders [*Freisinnige*] around Richter imagine a possible joining of forces between Free-Mindedness [*Freisinn*] and Social Democracy in the *Landtag* election in such a way that the Social Democrats have to transfer their electors' votes to the Free-Minders, where these would not be returned without the help of the former, without any other reciprocal offer than the efforts to be expected from the Free-Minders in the *Landtag*, or simply because the Free-Minders represent the lesser evil for us compared to the Conservatives and other groups on the right. But that any such support for Free-Minders by social democrats must be compensated for through support for social democrats by Free-Minders those people will not get into their heads. They have hitherto with very few exceptions rejected demands along these lines in such a way that one had and has to conclude that, in their eyes, Social Democracy does not even have any right to claim its own representation in the *Landtag* at all, or that compared to the Conservatives, etc., it even represents the greater evil.

Free-Minders to whom this applies cannot really be considered plausible allies [*bündnisfähig*] for Social Democracy at all, or seen as entitled to

its support—just as they also carry their name only after the pattern of the *canis a non canendo* [dog, because it does not sing].[1] What significance, what value, what purpose can political Free-Mindedness even have in the party struggle today, if the word is to signify a progressive liberalism? Anybody who examines the question carefully will find that the test for the authenticity of liberal, that is, freedom-oriented [*freiheitlich*] sentiment today lies nowhere other than in its stance towards socialism, towards the workers' movement, towards the working class's struggle for emancipation. Anyone whose liberalism does not retain its colours here is not someone who much is to be thought of at all. All other questions of the time about which the bourgeois liberal parties are at loggerheads with the conservative parties pale into insignificance more and more relative to this question, or find in it their sharply decisive formulation for the first time.

Can, for example, someone be a sincere enemy of the class franchise and a reliable defender of the general franchise who sees in the socialist workers' movement an evil to be fought? That is plainly impossible today. The modern workers' movement is in its nature, as is shown in all countries, necessarily socialist. Even where it calls itself something else, as for example still in Anglo-Saxon countries, it is by the nature of things forced into making socialist demands, into a socialist policy, and the general franchise is a means of achieving a breakthrough for this tendency in legislation and administration. As such, it is all the more effective the stronger the working class is numerically in relation to the rest of the population, and the more unified its associations are. In both respects, in Germany it is experiencing uninterrupted growth, and for that reason the politician who denies socialism's legitimacy and sees in it an evil that is fundamentally to be combatted, will inwardly turn ever more away from the general franchise and yearn for the moment where an end is put to it. Whereas on the other hand, the politician who holds democratic institutions close to heart, so who is liberal in the great world-historical sense of the word, is required precisely by the logic of facts to become intimately acquainted with socialism, to grasp its historical mission, to strive for an understanding with it. Anyone who does not succeed in this, who cannot overcome the old hatred, the fundamental opposition to Social Democracy, they belong—even if party tradition or other considerations keep them back in the camp of the parties on the left—in substance to the reactionary parties. In their sentiment, they are actually a member of the reactionary mass, and will at the decisive moments also be so in their actions.

This must be kept in mind all the more, since the trajectory of development has not narrowed but rather *widened* the bridge that leads from liberalism to socialism. 25 years ago, for example, socialism was still inflected strongly with sectarian-utopian elements, in its economic programme there still figured in the highest place the deeply questionable demand for state financing of producer cooperatives, which was underpinned by a more mechanical than evolutionary conception. For, to mention this incidentally, the opposite of evolution is not revolution, which rather is included within it—every evolution in its trajectory ultimately becomes a fundamental change versus the old, which means a revolution in the nature of things—but rather the mechanical, arbitrary conception of matters. Just as this once dominated humanity's conceptions of the nature and emergence of the world, it also imposed itself on socialist thought in the movement's infancy, even among people who in principle already represented the evolutionary idea—precisely because the small size of the movement and the undeveloped state of conditions still did not allow socialist effects to be hoped for from any form of intervention whatsoever other than from measures that stood in absolute contradiction with the existing economic mode.

That has completely changed over the course of development and through the development of things themselves. The socialist workers' movement has grown mightily, but at the same time and necessarily—for it was the condition of its growth—it has become much more closely entwined with the economic organism of society than at any earlier time. As a result of this, its practical demands are tied much more closely to what exists [*das Gegebene*] than before, they amount to a much stronger degree to its *organic further development*, and a bluntly mechanical intervention contradicts more and more its own interest, which instead flourishes best with a consistent continuation of production. If hence liberal papers have described the minimum electoral programme [*Mindestwahlprogramm*] just published by the party leadership of German Social Democracy for the *Landtag* elections as comprising all manner of liberal demands, one can acknowledge that it is correct in the sense that the programme in fact does not contain any demand that a liberal who is still serious about their liberalism today could not and would not have to subscribe to and energetically stand up for. Only in their relation with and in application to modern state and economic life do they in fact still represent a significant piece of socialism, which has hitherto mostly been shamefully neglected or even been directly abandoned by the liberal parties, without exception of their

most extreme left. Insofar as that did not just happen because it was assumed that it would benefit socialism, the cause of this abandonment is to be found in the circumstance that bourgeois liberalism today lacks the required motives and powerful elements to represent it effectively. For its own demands, liberalism in Germany is forced to rely on the forces that socialism has at its disposal, and it would be engaging in vain shenanigans if politicians who describe themselves as *Free-Minded* expect Social Democracy to let itself be fobbed off with the undignified role of being vote fodder for the bourgeois liberal parties. Defending such impertinence means retrospectively sanctioning the three-class franchise that has outrageously disenfranchised the working class, since only on the basis of this illiberal electoral system has it been hitherto impossible for Social Democracy to get into the Prussian parliament off its own back. It is indeed a fine enemy of a wrong who derives from this wrong an entitlement for themselves against those injured by it!

Under no circumstances can Social Democracy allow itself to play games of this kind in this election. The threat by the Free-Minders that one is strengthening reaction in the Prussian *Landtag* if one denies them unconditional military obedience [*Heeresfolge*] in the *Landtag* election is mere dissimulation. Either—or. Anybody who wishes to engage in serious struggle against the parties of reaction in the *Landtag* can neither demand nor as much as permit—insofar as it is down to them—that Social Democracy be left outside in this struggle, in the servants' quarters. Instead, they must do their very utmost on their own initiative to win them over as allies alongside them, or behind them as driven fellow-fighters within the *Landtag* itself. Without a social-democratic extreme left, a struggle between the Conservatives and *Zentrum* on the one side and the liberal factions on the other will only be a skirmish over trifles, in which the working class has only a very subdued interest.

One should not forget one thing: however much *Zentrum* has lately gone backwards, it still has all the same precisely in Prussia a number of elements that still side in most political questions in their democratic oppositional spirit with the bulk of the Free-Minders, as has been shown previously. Most Free-Minders still have yet to offer proof that they are politically more radical than the *Zentrum* people from West of the Elbe. For a whole range of reasons, *Zentrum* in Rhenish and Westphalian industrial regions must take into account ever more the Catholic workers there who are awakening ever more to their class consciousness. However much we may object to, for example, in the social-political flyers of the

well-known Gladbach-Verlag, compared to the equivalent publications of the joint-stock company *Fortschritt* they are in their tone as well as their content the significantly more enjoyable literature. One will perhaps point to the reactionary tendencies of *Zentrum* in the school question. Certainly, Social Democracy is hostile towards them, and will at all times fight them with the greatest energy. But with all that, we do not want to let ourselves be chased into a *Kulturkampf* mindset, which could lead to nothing sensible as things stand. Today, where steam and electricity penetrate into the remotest areas, even the most reactionary church power cannot prevent the spread of the recognition of lawfulnesses in nature, and the struggle between natural research and biblical interpretation opposed to it has been practically decided. Behind the noise with which the one side drums up people against God and all that is holy, and the other against Darwin and the heathen universities, there now fundamentally lies heartily little anymore. After all, whole armies of researchers work, day in, day out, to increase our awareness of the laws of movement and development of the world without a jot of concern for it. But against the power that the Church exercises over humanity by dint of its social events, anti-socialist liberalism is the most ineffective ally of all.

No slogan is readier-at-hand—and because it is so ready-at-hand, also so suited to fostering thoughtlessness—as the slogan of *reaction*. With it, only too often all necessary distinction is extinguished; it is for that reason also the favourite word of the philistine who thinks themselves radical. Who will deny that we have reaction in abundance? Powers of the most varied kind, classes and institutions stand in the way of social progress, seek if not directly to turn back then still as far as they possibly can to put the brakes on the wheel of history. Social Democracy means welcoming every honest alliance [*Bundesgenossenschaft*] that is willing to help wage the struggle against these powers. But it will not surrender itself in blind rage or blind fear about certain powers to becoming the vote fodder of parties that have already failed the most elementary test of their political reliability. A liberal who is not suffused by the need for Social Democracy to be represented in parliament, who does not want to recognise that without Social Democracy no powerful creative expansion of the liberal idea is possible, who does not do everything in their power to exorcise the stupid fear of socialists from their audience, can—we repeat—be no supporter of the democratic franchise. They must fear it or hate it in the depths of their heart, and will betray it at the first opportunity. It is also no longer possible to ignore Social Democracy in the struggle over the

Prussian *Landtag*. We cannot determine the outcome of the elections in detail in advance, but in general at least so much can very likely be predicted, that in a whole series of constituencies it will bring Social Democracy enough votes to make the decision over the seats of the right and the left dependent on it. The Free-Minders *à la* Richter count on the fact that at the last moment, the social democrats either out of hatred or fear of the right, will give them their votes even without them having to surrender any seats. Which is counting chickens before they are hatched.

In the moment where Social Democracy wins a number of *Landtag* seats by its own efforts, the last and simultaneously the shabbiest excuse with which the Free-Minders have hitherto defended their refusal to stand aside for Social Democracy in any seats also falls—namely, that they said: You social democrats, as experience shows, you will not even get into the *Landtag*, so if you want to serve your interests, you *must* vote for us, and consequently you have no right whatsoever to demand that we step down in seats on top of that as well! You could read comments to that effect over the last few weeks in several Free-Minded papers. A truly boastful line of argument, but then again it belongs to the unique characteristics of Free-Mindedness under Richter's leadership that the more it declines, the more it uses the language of political ascendancy. But this argument is at an end as soon as the eventuality above comes about. The central election committee [*Zentralwahlkomitee*] of Social Democracy faces the Free-Minders quite differently when it already controls a few seats than if it is still sitting there without them. Social Democracy can leave the Free-Minded to their fate, if they persist in their intransience, with far greater peace of mind once it has ensured that the voice of the struggling working class will in all circumstances sound out in the Prussian *Landtag*.

Hence, in all those constituencies where it is possible to return social-democratic deputies by its own efforts, the party will do the utmost to bring about this result. Furthermore, we must see about taking in hand the decision between the opposing parties in as many other constituencies as possible. The responsibility for what the new *Landtag* looks like will then rest with the Free-Minders. The programme of action worked out for the *Landtag* election by the central election committee of Social Democracy would make this decision easy for them if their liberalism were broad-minded and capable of development. As it is, the hopes for a revival of free-thinking policy in German Free-Mindedness are only very slight. The scandalous way in which this party has sidelined those within its ranks

who have stood up for a serious attempt at reaching an understanding with the modern workers' movement indicates the opposite.

So be it. There is absolutely no way that Social Democracy will let itself be misled. It deals in more solid factors than the great figures and moods of the day. Where it is up to it to fight the political and social powers of reaction, this will certainly happen. But one cannot ask it to take a struggle against reaction seriously in any way if those who proclaim it, as soon as it comes down to it in the fight, prefer the first Junker or other shady character to any representative of the aspiring working class. Before it expects such anti-reactionaries to actually weaken reaction in any way whatsoever, it might as well take its chances on the semi-feudal Bülow resisting the agrarians East of the Elbe, and on the conservative Graf Posadowsky's capacity for social-political development beyond the capitalist Manchester School.[2]

Notes

1. *Canis a non canendo* [dog, because it does not sing] is a deliberately paradoxical antiphrasis, allegedly originally by Marcus Terentius Varro, which caricatures folk and pseudo-etymologies. Similar phrases are *lucus a non lucendo* [grove, because it does not shed light], *lupus a non lupendo* [wolf, because it does not grieve], and the more poetic example *bellum a nulla re bella* [war, because there is nothing lovely in it] by Maurus Servius Honoratus.
2. Bernhard Heinrich Martin Karl von Bülow (1849–1929), German politician and statesman, Foreign Secretary (1897–1900) and Chancellor (1900–1909), oversaw the collapse of Otto von Bismarck's diplomatic isolation of France and the Herero and Nama genocide in German South-West Africa. Arthur Adolf von Posadowsky-Wehner (1845–1932), German conservative statesman, Secretary of the Treasury (1893–1897), Secretary of the Interior and Vice Chancellor (1897–1907), leading figure in the German National People's Party [*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*] in the early Weimar Republic.

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CHAPTER 29

On the Value of Parliamentarism

Sozialistische Monatshefte 10(6) (June 1904), pp. 423–8.

In three successive Reichstag by-elections, German Social Democracy has lost 3 seats that it won on 16 June 1903. In all three cases, there are circumstances that prevent the opponents in these various constituencies from making a big deal of their victory over Social Democracy. In the Zschopau–Marienberg constituency, it was a conflict within Social Democracy that paralysed its capacity for action and so lent its opponents undeserved support. Apart from that—and this also applies to the two other constituencies—its opponents benefited from the circumstance that these elections were undertaken on the basis of the voting list from the previous year, which for Social Democracy, whose voters are recruited almost exclusively from among the workers, consistently results in the loss of a certain percentage of its vote. Workers who have relocated in the meantime cannot exercise their right to vote, while the newly-arrived workers do not yet have the franchise in their constituency, because they are not yet entered into these lists. That stands in contradiction with the spirit of electoral determination laid down in the Reich constitution. Within the Reich, the Reich constitution does not recognise any difference of local [*Ort*] or *Land* affiliation for Reich affairs: the Reichstag voter votes as a *Reich citizen*. Not how long he has lived in a certain place in the Reich but whether he is a member of a *Bundesstaat* [federal state] at all decides the property of being a Reichstag voter. Of

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right, in accordance with that, after it has become clear what a high percentage of voters changed their place of residence over the course of a year, subsection 3 of §8 of the Election Law [*Wahlgesetz*], under which the preparation of new voting lists is not required for by-elections that take place less than a year after the primary election is held, should be changed so that the validity of these lists may not last longer than a quarter-year at most, specifically not beyond the next date of relocation. But it is naturally quite a forlorn hope that the current Reichstag majority or even the federated governments would make any move towards revising the Election Law in this vein. Rather, everyone knows that in the circles of the open or clandestine enemies of the current Reichstag franchise, among other things, precisely the provision that requires a longer duration of residence for the achievement of voter status is seen as one of the means to let the Reichstag franchise exist nominally as a general, equal, and direct right to vote, and yet to limit it in practice. The experiences of these three by-elections will have strengthened rather than weakened the appetite for doing so.

Insofar as the loss of the 3 constituencies Zschopau–Marienberg, Sachsen–Altenburg, and Frankfurt–Lebus can be blamed on such shifts in the electorate, there is no reason for Social Democracy to be embarrassed about these defeats. For after all, they only illustrate the deficiency of the franchise [*Wahlunrecht*], and shine a brighter light onto the disenfranchisement [*Entrechtung*] of a greater number of voters. But the question is whether the loss of votes that Social Democracy had to register in the constituencies named above is exhaustively explained with reference to the relocation of some of its voters from these constituencies. Insofar as that is not the case, insofar as these losses evidence a positive shift of social-democratic votes to our opponents or even only reveal a reduction in the party's electoral appeal, Social Democracy surely has every reason to take the matter seriously and discuss its causes *sine ira*, but *maximo cum studio*.

But that will not happen in this article. Its purpose is rather to address a claim that a widely-read party organ has volunteered in its discussion of one of these elections, and which seems to us on this occasion not to be appropriate at all.

This was the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, which sought to console itself and its readers about the defeat suffered in its near environs with the remark that Social Democracy need not take this defeat too tragically, since in the last analysis its struggle is not a parliamentary one and will also not be decided in the parliaments. Its strength lies outside the parliaments.

That there is a great deal of truth in this we do not even have to mention at all at this point. After all, it is precisely we who ascribe the greatest significance to the extra-parliamentary work of the working class; it is precisely we who defend the idea that the working class should not expect everything from legislation or state administration, but rather should by itself creatively pursue a good part of its emancipatory work through the means of organised self-help in trade unions and cooperatives; that the working class itself has to call into being and build a part of the organs without whose existence at a significant level of strength and administrative force, based on its own experiences, the conquest of political power can only be a "one day" illusion, which would not be spared a painful awakening as an inevitable consequence. There also cannot or should not be any dispute among socialists that modern economic life, whether its defenders wish it to or not, is driven by its own development to create ever more personal and material conditions for the socialist transformation of society—otherwise known as social revolution—so that, although the social-democratic party is temporarily defeated, the socialist movement can never, ever be permanently extirpated.

But everything at its own time, and in metes and bounds. If parliamentarism is not the be-all and end-all for Social Democracy, then it is still enough for it not to treat its parliamentary position too lightly, and to shirk important self-examinations with the phrase: we'll manage just fine *like this too*. Not only can we, but rather we even should manage *like this*, but insofar as it is down to us, we should do so as a *complement*, not as a replacement. This is not about an alternative, about the choice between two paths, both of which in its own way leads to the same goal. Instead, it is about two forces whose cooperation [*Zusammenwirken*] is required, which only through their reciprocal influence reach the point of asserting themselves to their full effective capacity. This realisation has forced itself on Social Democracy over the course of long struggles based on *experience*. It is, as is vividly illustrated in Paul Kampffmeyer's recent work *Changes in the Theory and Tactics of Social Democracy*, an insight that is not preconceived, or *received*, so to speak, from theoretical deduction, but rather one that has been *gained* in the school of practice.[1] We *know* that we cannot say *either–or* here, but rather that a healthy development can only be vouched for if it takes place under the motto *both–and*. Only under the latter condition will the question of how and when, that is to say the question about the *way* and the *time* of realising socialist endeavours find the best possible solution. But it is quite surely our task in this respect to aspire to the best possible outcome.

It is not enough that, so to speak, we carry around with us the theoretical certainty *that* something that we aspire to will also find its realisation under all circumstances. Such theoretical assurances are not, in the first instance, absolute certainties. History has already comprehensively thwarted the best-laid plans of many seemingly incontrovertibly-justified theoretical assurances, and honoured others only after a very long time and with many changes and limitations. But we can never and must never treat the moment of *time* and *way* as an incidental matter. Precisely those who consider the eventual occurrence of a thing to be guaranteed are allotted the task of expediting the point in time when it takes place, and shaping the way of realising it as favourably as possible.

Hence we do not have any *right* whatsoever to judge parliamentarism and its possibilities to be any less than what they are. Today, where the opponents of Social Democracy arm themselves on all sides to cut off or restrict its parliamentary activity, it may seem to some or others among us perhaps a demand of political cleverness to display a certain indifference in respect of parliamentarism, and all the more to emphasise the extra-parliamentary moments that work in favour of socialism. But this view is the target of the lines that Lassalle places in the mouth of Balthasar in *Sickingen*:

> The foe alone, disguised as you may be,
> Soon has you out—he is your best assessor …
> His hatred judges you more fairly than
> The mass, oft fairer than your friend may judge you.[2]

The enemies of Social Democracy, the sworn enemies of workers' emancipation—they today know only too well what value parliamentarism can have for the working class, what strength lies in it, what possibilities it offers. Not only that they have exploited it for themselves long enough—and heaven knows how generously. They have also had quite enough experience of the fact that, where necessary, the workers' party does not lack the capacity to make effective use of this weapon. And insofar as they have not discovered this, no one can say again with Lassalle:

> The foe spies mighty natures in advance,
> Long ere, in hope, a friend draws closer to them.

Our opponents, the defenders of all antiquated privileges, know very well today what it means for them, and for the standard-bearers of the

New, which of them holds parliamentary positions—precisely because it is primarily the moment of *time* that plays such a great role in the political struggles of the present. Braking, deferring, delaying—what sorts of things are not contained in these words! Every prolonging of their power means for the representatives of the Old a new opportunity to contrive difficulties, to put obstacles in the path of development, to create rights and interests that can be played off against the arrival of the New. But it is the *masses*, that is, the great majority of the working class, who have still not yet fully grasped the possibilities and the value of parliamentarism. And that is only natural. Because for them, parliamentarism is mainly still something abstract or metaphysical, something that is not yet alive for them. For after all it is yet to become the bearer and expression of their interests.

The great mass of the working class has so far only half-grasped the significance of parliamentary representation. Certainly, when it is called to vote, it makes use of its right; where it has to choose between bourgeois candidates and socialists, it will also prefer the latter without requiring much talking-to; but in general, voting is for it still more of a *demonstration*, a manifestation of its *sentiment*, than a transfer of mandate in the sense that it is equivalent to participation in the government through the means of the mandatary representative [*Mandatar*]. But that is what it should be according to the nature of parliamentarism, and it is so or it will be so to the extent that parliamentarism truly *lives* within the electorate. And where it is perceived in this way by the voter, where it is exercised by them not as the exercise of an abstract right, but rather as a conscious and decided transfer of will, then voting will be a *need* for them as well, they will insist on it, they will conceive of the franchise not as a *permission* to vote, but as an *important privilege* that has been *won*, and exercise and as the case may be *defend* it too.

What matters is to educate the voters to this conception—more today than at any earlier time. But that will surely not happen if, just because a couple of elections have come out unfavourably, one immediately cries sour grapes after the example of Master Reineke.[3] No, the grapes are not sour, they are edible and must be reached for, because the people need the grape treatment—that is to say, they need parliamentarism.

Parliamentarism is not a complete institution and not the final word of state development. It is also not the only decisive force in this development, but rather only one among a plurality of forces that determine its path. But it is an important force, a substantial organ, a powerful lever of this development. Like all political institutions, it is exposed to the

corrupting influence of routine, and starts to lose if one examines it from too close up. If one wants to evaluate it correctly, then one must regard it historically and dynamically. Humans ultimately remain the same everywhere. Hans remains Hans whether he sits in the office or behind the machinist's vice, whether he works in the comptoir or collaborates in making legislation in parliament. His human weaknesses will assert themselves everywhere. Herbert Spencer recounts in his recently-published autobiography with great amusement how aghast some people once were when he, the philosopher, held a picnic; how surprised Mr Carnegie was when he heard Spencer call to the waiter during a meal on an Atlantic steamer: "Waiter, I did not order Cheshire Cheese, I ordered cheddar cheese"; and how a Frenchman could not believe his eyes when he saw him, Spencer, playing billiards. The preoccupation with philosophy does not yet make the thinker an incorporeal, bloodless abstraction, and the parliamentary mandate does not yet make those who are blessed with it superhuman, even if a certain educative effect of parliamentary activity cannot and should not be denied. They must be incredibly dull of sense who do not experience any broadening of their horizons through their participation in parliamentary work, of which the most important after all happens behind the scenes in the commissions. Here too the office makes the man, and it would be very wrong entirely to overlook this educative effect of parliamentarism on those who exercise it. Ultimately it cannot be irrelevant for a political movement whether or not it has a number of people in its ranks to whom the budget and what belongs to it is not a closed book. Whoever judges parliamentarism only from outside will either over- or underestimate it; and the uncertainty that is still frequently to be found in Social Democracy as soon as it comes to determine its fundamental stance towards parliamentarism is also a product of the fact that the first socialist publications about it were by people who only judged it from the outside, and who aside from that granted bourgeois society significantly shorter durability than it actually enjoys. The doctrine that emerged in this way lives on still today as a tradition and interferes with our thinking, even though practice has long since led to a different verdict. So long as the great communities comprising millions of people endure, parliaments will also continue as indispensable organs of legislation and of controlling administration, only subject to change insofar as their power relative to the central executive authority must increase, while at the same time they cede ever more functions to regional or specific self-administering bodies. But since it is the parliament that determines the composition and constitution

of these bodies, this is yet another reason why the working class must insist on being represented in the parliaments according to its numerical strength and cultural force. It does not have to see every regional defeat as a tragedy, but it may also not take any defeat too lightly. Above all, however, it has to be alert against all attacks on the general franchise. Nothing would be more fateful than if an opinion gained ground among the working class that the franchise is not really all that important. However great or little the importance of the franchise, it is a *right* of the working class, and a class that strives forwards may not let so much as an iota of its right be taken away from it or challenged, without resisting this with all the energy it can muster.

Notes

1. Paul Kampffmeyer, *Wandlungen in der Theorie und Taktik der Sozialdemokratie* (Munich: G. Birk, 1904).
2. Ferdinand Lassalle, 'Franz von Sickingen', in Ferdinand Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften, vol. 1*, Eduard Bernstein (ed.) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), p. 308.
3. Reineke Fuchs is a fox character in medieval German epic poetry who saves himself from precarious situations through imaginative lies and selective misdemeanours, conflated with the Aesop's fable of "The Fox and the Grapes".

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CHAPTER 30

Class and Class Struggle

Sozialistische Monatshefte 11(10) (October 1905), pp. 857–64.

In all struggles where human beings confront one another as groups, as far as we can trace them back into history, certain watchwords or indicative slogans play an especially prominent role. Any reflecting person likes to give their struggle a figurative [*übertragen*] significance, and also, where humans are not pitted against one another like animals, a somewhat coherent mass struggle is hard to bring into being without the aid of symbolic or symbolising concepts. Individuals or smaller groups can undertake and carry out struggles over purely material interests fully conscious of what they are; if the group becomes larger, its cohesiveness and the voluntary sacrifice of its members can only be ensured by associating with the struggle an ideological interest: fame, honour, the power of the species [*Geschlecht*], of the tribe and later of the nation, the fame or also the power of deities or cultural sites, of highly-regarded leaders or rulers, of religious ideas, or ideals of right, etc. By appealing to every possible notion of this kind, or driven by them, humanity has fought its greater or lesser struggles since ancient times. At lower stages it emblematises them to itself through crude material symbols or fetishes, which *prima facie* are taken with particular relish from the animal world, then one reaches for effigies of human beings, later insignia from the plant world or also mere coloured tokens perform the required service, and finally words take the place of depictions and colours, or take turns with them in the task of eliciting the notions and moods required by the needs of the struggle.

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Whether humanity will ever fully get beyond this symbolism may be left to speculative consideration; that we have not yet overcome it today even in the most advanced civilised countries [*Kulturländer*], a glance at the way campaigns take place in these countries shows. Wherever the eye turns here, we still meet the tendency to symbolically coat or disguise the struggles waged or the perceived oppositions. As once the *wolves* fought against the *heron*, the *sons of Israel* against the *children of Baal*, the levies of the *lily* against that of the *rose*, the party of the *Sea-greens* against the party of the *Blues*, as one plunged into battle with cries such as *God and the blessed Virgin!*, *Rome and the holy Church!*, *Luther and the Gospel!*, so today, besides references to concrete demands, one forms groups under appeals to general concepts that—like, for example, the concepts of *the people*, *freedom*, *equality*—are capable of different definitions and, if they gain currency in a certain meaning, become a fetish just like the first available idol does for a negro tribe, to which objective enquiry and realistic thinking falls victim.

Against this tendency to hypostasise concepts, the fathers of the materialist conception of history took to the field in their time with particular severity. At it were directed a good share of the most vigorous attacks that Marx–Engels aimed in their first writings against the leading literary spokespeople of the bourgeois left and a number of socialists of the time. The polemic against the Bauers, the work in their *Nachlass* against Max Stirner, the critique in the *Communist Manifesto* against the *true socialists* are full of bloody scorn about the conceptual fetishism that was practised by these people, either in fact or—for in the polemic there was also a lot of exaggeration—to all appearances. To it Marx–Engels opposed the theory of class struggle as a foundation of a thoroughly realistic conception and treatment of the political struggles of the time. How far, by doing so, they themselves were again also guilty of conceptual fetishism shall not be further explored here. That the theory was a great advance is certain and today is pretty much admitted on all sides. But no theoretical advance is safe from one day becoming inimical to insight in its turn, and placing hurdles in the way of the realistic-scientific assessment of things. All that is required is that the truth that it signified be conceived dogmatically as the last word on the matter, for it to itself again become a fetish that, instead of honing people's gaze for reality, more or less veils it.

Our thinking is a connecting and comparing of concepts. We form a concept of everything that we think about, and it is the task of the science of perception to establish whether and in how far our concept aligns with

the thing itself that we understand by it. Now this is made much harder, among other things, by the fact that, especially in the humanities [*Geisteswissenschaften*], the concepts themselves are subject to change, their usage is hence varied, and it must always first be established what notion the general public in question associates with it. It is an everyday experience that human beings often argue to the point of the highest embitterment about a matter simply because they understand completely different things by it, and have failed to grapple with the concept beforehand.

So today countless people carry the terms *class* and *class struggle* in their mouths, and make them the object of vigorous discussions and factional divisions [*Parteiungen*]. But if one asks them what they understand by these concepts, if one asks them to define them precisely, then one will bring quite a few of them into embarrassed perplexity, and receive very varied answers from others. To one the matter might seem settled with the opposition between bourgeoisie and proletariat, to another with that between capitalist and wage-labourer, to a third with that between property-owners and property-less, and for certain purposes such binary divisions are also useful after all. But a glance at our richly structured society shows that for a scientific regard of things, that is, one that precisely conforms to the state of the facts, these binaries are absolutely insufficient and misleading. And that in this it is not a matter of a mere *doctoral thesis question*, the social and political party formations in the present show, which cannot yet remotely be slotted into the binary schema. For every discussion that does not remain at the flattest level of superficiality it is absolutely inadequate.

In the face of this situation, it may seem safest to consult the originators or first developers of the theory of class struggle, Marx–Engels. But as soon as we try to do this and look around more closely in their works, we confront the fact that they do not use these concepts consistently with always the same meaning, but at various times have explained it in deviated form. In his new book *Theoretical Foundations of Marxism*, Tugan-Baranovsky has examined this besides other questions as well, and realised that Marx, in the period that stretches from the writing of *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1846) to his authoring of the letters to the *New York Tribune* (1852), which were published after his death under the title *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, uses the concept of *class* in two strictly-differentiated interpretations, in one case economic-social and in the other case political-social, specifically, in the first case according to the

objective marker of the *situation*—one could also say: of what is—and in the other case at the same time according to the subjective marker of *consciousness*, and a quite specific consciousness at that, which expresses itself in taking a social-political stance.[1] This is best illustrated by the fact that Marx–Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* describe "*formation of the proletariat into a class*" as the "immediate aim" of the communists.[2] What shall or must still be formed does not yet exist, and so according to that the proletariat, as the communists come upon it in Germany at the time, would not yet have been a class, but would become one only through the *spirit* that the communists had to imbue it with. That in fact the passage was meant like that emerges from a bit in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, where Marx explains how economic conditions have made the mass of the population into workers with a common situation and common interests vis-à-vis capital, and then continues:

> This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have pointed out only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle.[3]

That is so clear that we do not need to adduce other passages that speak in favour of the same conceptual distinction, but can agree with Tugan-Baranovsky without further ado when he thereupon wants to regard incidents such as the fact that, in *Eighteenth Brumaire*, at one point the parcel-farmers of France are described as its *most numerous class*, and at another point as *not a class at all*, not as a logical contradiction, but rather as a laxity of expression. Two different phases in class development are distinguished here, and only in the second phase, where consciousness and commonality of struggle are added to economic *existence*, is the multitude [*Vielheit*] delimited by a common situation and common interests a class for Marx in the actual sense of this word. In the first phase, it is only a *class in itself*.

The logic of this distinction is not to be doubted. But it is quite another question whether it is factually justified to introduce it in this way to the social-static concept of *class*. And that will have to be a matter of some dispute. Everyone is free to come up with a new term for a new concept, with which they multiply the wealth of the language, as the case may be. But they impoverish it and cause the most acute confusion if they

arbitrarily impose another specific meaning on a term that is already used in a particular sense. Such linguistic arbitrariness is to be decisively rejected. Marx here needlessly confuses the concepts of *class* and *party*. *Class*, in the sense of societal class, is an *economic-social* concept, for the determination of which the *objective economic* and *legal* markers, and *only* these, are determinant. The behaviour of a class is entirely incidental for establishing its existence [*Vorhandensein*]. This is particularly true from the standpoint of the materialist conception of history, which after all precisely derives the ideology of a class from its societal conditions of existence. What Marx meant with his distinction is naturally clear, namely that a class has only reached the full height of its development once it has conceived of its oppositionality towards other classes in its entire historical scope and expressed it in conscious, comprehensive struggle. But this idea could be described far more clearly and unmistakeably through a composite term than through a phraseology where the same word is used alternately in quite different senses. At the close of his development during this time, in his letters to the *New York Tribune* about the European revolution, Marx uses the word *class* quite correctly in his generally usual sense, and distinguishes, as Tugan-Baranovsky observes, summarily between eight societal classes in Germany at the time, according to their economic-social traits.

In general, one may doubt whether Marx later internally preserved the double usage of the term *class* described above. In the third volume of *Capital*, which was written at the start of the 1860s, Marx returns in the final chapter to the topic of classes and poses the question: "What constitutes a class?" Sadly we only get a small part of his answer, since the chapter remained incomplete. We learn only this much, that Marx calls wage-labourers, capitalists, and landowners the "three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production", and *a priori* lets them be determined through the "identity of revenues and sources of revenue": labour wage, profit, and ground rent, specifically, selling [*Verwertung*] of labour power, capital, and landed property. But this derivation, as Marx adds, is not sufficient by itself. For otherwise, for example, doctors and officials would also constitute two classes, since they belong to two different societal occupations, in which "the members of each of these groups receiving their revenue from one and the same source". The same would "also be true of the infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labour splits labourers as well as capitalists and landlords".[4]

With this last remark, the chapter breaks off, and we are left to speculate about what Marx now wanted to regard as the further decisive factor or factors of class distinctions. Already the choice of the phrase *big class* shows that with him, the concept of *class* was not limited to wage-labourers, capitalists, and landowners. Tugan-Baranovsky thinks that overall, for Marx, the arrangement of classes [*Klassengliederung*] was determined according to the relation of the various societal *strata* towards the *majority*, or rather, according to the *relations of exploitation*. Several things speak in favour of this conception, though in this again it also remains a separate question whether Marx's conceptual definition aligns with reality, or to what degree it does so. Self-evidently, occupational distinction [*Berufsscheidung*] and class distinction [*Klassenscheidung*] are two different things. The general use of language, to which we ultimately still have to recourse in societal questions, if we do not want to fall into pure scholasticism, certainly speaks of a *stratum* [*Stand*] of doctors in the sense of a professional trade [*Berufsstand*], but not of doctors as a class *simpliciter*. But it differentiates classes among doctors, just as also in other professional trades. In short, *class* as a social characteristic is for him a concept of the *horizontal*, not the vertical societal stratification, sometimes closely related to rank [*Rang*] and often even used equivalently to it. Now economically, in capitalist society, differences in rank translate into differences of *income*, in the rule as a fact, always as a tendency. Higher societal classes are classes with higher income. Besides the *source* of income, its *level* is a marker of class. That is so much the case that not only in the vulgar vernacular but even in social statistics often the division according to income sources must give way to that according to income levels, or is constrained by it. If we speak of the *class of landowners*, then this always refers to owners of landed property that secures at least a certain higher income; likewise with the capitalist class, with the classes of officials, etc. Now certainly one can presume or even prove that most of the people with higher incomes have an interest in gaining surplus value above the proletarian labour wage, and among people with the lowest incomes, regardless of their source, mostly a conscious or at least latent enmity towards them. But the relationship to surplus value is in no way always direct. In actual societal life, the *level of income* and the *social life situation* [*Lebensstellung*] and *life conduct* [*Lebensführung*] associated with it or conditioned by it become the most descriptive measure of class belonging, while the derivation of income from work, capital, or possession of land certainly likewise remains a marker of distinction, but more for specifically economic

considerations than for general social differentiation. This namely also because the societal body is not becoming simpler but ever more complicated, because for the classes that capitalism makes disappear, new ones constitute themselves in strengthened numbers, in particular the host of officials of all kinds uncommonly gains in strength, and likewise that of the so-called *free professions*, etc., *strata* and classes with which the relation to surplus value does not quite disappear, as remarked above, but still often becomes very *mediated*. Marx saw this development as well, but always only expressed himself about it in passing.

In the introduction to the cited final chapter of the third volume of *Capital*, Marx emphasises that even in England, where the economic structure of modern society was the furthest and most classically developed, this class structure does not emerge in its pure form, and that "even here" intermediary and transitional stages obscure the determination of boundaries everywhere—"although", he adds, "incomparably less in rural districts than in the cities".[5] We will and can here quite ignore the fact that the development of agricultural conditions in England is a unique phenomenon in very substantial points, and does not, as Marx assumed, represent the typical form of modern development. All in all, in Germany and other modern developed countries too the class structure in the countryside is very much simpler and more transparent than in the city. But precisely this shows how wrong the assumption was that modern development would lead to the simplification of class structure. For the city, and not the countryside, is determinant for it—so much so that, as Karl Bücher first indicated, one can rightly *speak of an urbanisation of society*.[6] The class structure in the countryside preserves the typical form of the old precapitalist society for longer than the one in the city. How much especially in England feudal legal institutions, in particular primogeniture, contributed to the situation that the countryside did not follow the development of the cities even in relative terms, is well-known. Similarly, in all countries that have not yet or only in a limited scope entered capitalist development, we come across endlessly less differentiation of classes than where this has attained its full maturity. If then Marx at the place in question continues to describe the fact that intermediary or transitional stages "obliterate" the boundary determinations of the three great classes he distinguishes—wage-labourers, capitalists, and landowners—to be "immaterial" for the observations to be made in the chapter about classes, then we must conclude from this that either here too again he wanted to give the concept of *class* a far narrower meaning than fits actual class divisions, or ascribed no

importance whatsoever to the fact that the occupational *strata* in all classes were multiplying. That this was no secret to him is shown, besides the reference cited above to the endless fragmentation of interests that the societal division of labour has as a result, by the sixth section of the thirteenth chapter of the first volume of *Capital*, where he describes as the "immediate" consequence of the rise of machinery the percentage increase in the capitalist class *and its following* [*Anhang*], in particular also in the workers used unproductively as a "servant class".[7] Now if he assumed that this growth of the capitalist class was only a temporary phenomenon and would later again give way to a progressive shrinking as a result of growing concentration of enterprises—in the twenty-fourth chapter he famously holds out the prospect of a "constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation"—then this conception would also make his indifference towards that class differentiation fairly understandable.[8] But the assumption itself has proved to be flawed. The number of capital magnates is not decreasing, but increasing, and likewise the number of medium and smaller capitalists is growing incessantly. This, like the growth of officialdom, of the so-called *free professions*, etc., has now also been conceded by those socialists who seven or eight years ago still disputed it on the assumption that admitting it would mean declaring socialism to be a forlorn hope. Now fortunately that is not how things turned out. Yet something was still affected by this realisation: the picture of class struggle, in the way that it had been constructed based on the earlier assumption, was untenable in its simplicity.

If society in every respect is becoming a more complicated organism, if the differentiation of its elements is continuing to increase, then class struggle too cannot restrict itself to those simple forms, cannot merely play out in those simple juxtapositions towards which it would have had to intensify according to Marx's theory of class. It cannot do so and also has not done so. Reality does not let itself be determined by conceptual schemata that are artificially adapted to some doctrine. The formula *formation of the proletariat into a class* has proved to be far too uncertain. The class struggle of the working class makes both things necessary: unification [*Zusammenfassung*] and differentiation, and both for *permanent* purposes. The Marxist theory has also acknowledged a certain measure of differentiation in its old formulation: besides the political organisation of the working class, it already made room early on for the separate mission of its organisation into trade unions. But this mission was conceived in

quite a subsidiary way, as that of a preliminary stage or an auxiliary organ, not as that of an organ that would permanently have to solve certain tasks. This latter conception could also not find its place at all in that old theory of class development. After all, it still has to struggle with it today. Hence on the one side a mistrust towards the trade unions, which breaks through again and again, and on the other side a barely-concealed contempt for theory, which affects anybody who holds theoretical thinking in high esteem only all the more distressingly if it garbs itself in the guise of theoretical commonplaces. This sorry state of affairs can only be ended by a thorough re-examination of the theory of class. Only once we have attained a conception of the concepts of *class* and *class struggle* that is free of all fetishism will we come to appreciate the organs and forms of modern class struggle in a way that conforms to the class development of the present day.

On the basis of Marx's distinction between *class in itself* and *class for itself*, Tugan-Baranovsky believes he can establish the proposition that the claim in the *Communist Manifesto* that human history is the history of class struggles only has in view those periods of history where classes had, or rather have, developed from the state of class in itself to that of class for itself. But this proposition is only correct if one understands the concept of *class struggle* in a quite intensified form. Yet just as a class is still a class if it has not yet constituted itself as such politically, so too class struggle is also class struggle if it has not yet attained its highest consolidation and intensification. Apart from that, the more complicated society itself becomes, class struggle too must become an ever more complicated phenomenon, so that at no stage of social development is it fully congruent with that of earlier societal stages, or specifically, is it ever fully exhausted by their example. We can clearly recognise this from the development of both the political as well as the trade-union struggle of the working class, which are perhaps not the only but certainly the most historically-significant class struggles in modernity. To this consideration as regards the trade union struggle a subsequent article shall be dedicated. For one still comes across the strongest differences of opinion regarding the significance of its forms and methods for the class movement of the workers as a whole.

Notes

1. Mikhailo Ivanovich Tugan-Baranovsky (1865–1919), Ukrainian economist and socialist politician, prominent figure in the "Legal Marxist" tendency (1894–1901), which emphasised the importance of capitalist development in contrast to *narodnik* focus on the peasantry's role in transitioning to socialism.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–48* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 498.
3. Ibid., p. 211.
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 37: Marx – Capital, Volume III* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), pp. 870–1.
5. Ibid., p. 870.
6. Karl Wilhelm Bücher (1847–1930), German political economist, historian, and sociologist of labour, representative of the "Younger" Historical School of economics, protagonist in the 1903 *Bücher-Streit* [Bücher Dispute] over fixed book prices as an example of cartelisation within the publishing industry.
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 35: Marx – Capital, Volume I* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), pp. 448–9.
8. Ibid., p. 750.

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CHAPTER 31

On Class Struggle

Sozialistische Monatshefte 12(7) (July 1906), pp. 548–57.

There is much talk of class struggle today, and in Social Democracy the term has standing currency; there is barely any political address in which it has not played a role in some way or another, so that one is inclined to assume that, for every social democrat, just as for everyone who attends social-democratic gatherings and every reader of social-democratic writings and newspapers, especially if they belong to the working class, it must be pretty much not only one of the most familiar expressions, but also one of the clearest concepts. A letter that I received a while ago from a worker, whom I have known for years as a diligent attendee of social-democratic addresses and attentive reader of social-democratic writings, taught me otherwise. In it, this worker explained to me that for him there was still rather a lot of unclarity about the concepts of *class struggle* and *class consciousness*, and in a later verbal conversation I then found out from him that among his work colleagues, so far as they bother themselves with the question at all, the widest differences of opinion are to be found about the meaning of these concepts. A test in the form of a personally undertaken survey will confirm this. And not only as far as workers with a moderately average level of school education are concerned. No, one will even receive quite different answers from people with good academic education. As simple as the matter seems, most people who are asked to define it more exactly very soon run into a point where for them the story goes: "But

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here I stick! Who helps me to proceed?"[1] The reader should only subject themselves to the same test. That class struggle is the struggle between classes, even the staid old Bräsig who derived poverty from the great *Poverteh* could have told you.[2] But what are classes, what are their distinguishing characteristics, when does class struggle take place, what are its conditions, and by what does one recognise it?

Having said this first, I dare to print the questions of my interpellator here, since I may from now on surely hope that the reader will not skate over them with a lofty smirk because of their seemingly paradoxical form, and will not see in them simply signs of the naïve way of thinking of a still fairly young worker, who had entered life with little schooling, but rather evidence of an aptitude for subtle reflection. In the aforementioned letter it reads:

> Since 1899, since I first became organised, I have after all already read quite a lot, but I cannot properly get to grips with everything. So for example the terms *class struggle* and *class consciousness*. What does *class struggle* mean? That is my question to you. Does *class struggle* mean waging a struggle from out of one class, for instance Social Democracy, against a second or third class, in order to fight against this second or third class, or more accurately: to suppress them? Or is it also *class struggle* if there were only one class—Social Democracy—which still struggles, but now naturally cannot fight against another class any longer, because no other exists anymore, but rather merely still fights for its own interests, so that these do not get lost anymore? In short, does *class struggle* mean a struggle by a class fighting merely for its own interest, without thereby taking another class into consideration, or does *class struggle* mean waging a struggle to suppress another class? And now *class consciousness*! What does this signify? This is also not quite clear to me. Does *class consciousness* mean that a class is conscious of itself, about its own situation, etc., but without taking another class into consideration? Or does *class consciousness* mean that a class knows that there are several classes? So would one still need the term *class consciousness* if there were merely one class, for instance only Social Democracy?

So far the questioner. At first glance it appears as if he does not see the wood for the trees, and the answer is uncommonly simple. *Class struggle* evidently means struggle *between* classes, respectively by classes *against* a class or classes, so we can only speak of it where there are several or at least two societal classes. The concept of the term *class* is underpinned by a *distinction*, a *delimitation*, as its linguistic origin already shows. To speak of a single class is hence conceptually an absurdity: where there are not at

least two different classes, there is no class at all anymore, but rather only people who are distinguished from one another in age, gender, bodily and intellectual faculties and the like, but not permanently on the basis of their birth, their property, or their status in their societal rights or their societal power. For the latter is the identifying characteristic of societal classes. *Class consciousness* accordingly means *prima facie* the consciousness of belonging to a certain societal class that is distinct from other societal classes. But that already includes the requirement of a certain clarity about the nature of one's own and other classes, to which also belongs clarity about their differences in interests, and about the particular social demands of one's own class and the goals that emerge from them. Whether these interests or goals demand the suppression of other classes or merely make it necessary to fight against them for the purpose of removing privileges and preventing the implementation of their demands or claims, is determined according to the qualities of the classes in question and the level of development of production. Thus the interest of the bourgeoisie at the time indeed demanded the abolition of certain privileges of the nobility, but not by any means the suppression of the nobility itself, just as the interest of the nobility only demanded that they fight against certain claims by the bourgeoisie, but by no means the suppression of this class. The feudal lord of the late Middle Ages and the early capitalist era could often really use the moneybags, whom he hated for several reasons, whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, and likewise we see their progeny, the modern firmly-settled large landowner [*Großgrundbesitzer*] in the entailed estates [*fideikommisslich*] periodically taking up cudgels in our time to help realise the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie. Compare the speeches and deeds of Graf von Kanitz, this *Gutsherr* [squire] of Podangen who so often reminds one of the knights who try to levy tolls for passage.[3]

These references are the ones that initially press themselves upon us as an answer to the questions posed above, and it may appear at first glance as if, with that, the latter were essentially completely dealt with. Yet in reality that is not remotely the case. Almost everything said here was not unknown in substance to the writer of the cited letter; so we must ask ourselves, how did it come about that he did not consider the explanation of the concepts of *class struggle* and *class consciousness* to be exhausted with that?

An indication for this is provided by the circumstance, which will have readily stood out to anyone who thinks in a tolerably theoretical way, that the letter-writer constantly and exclusively cites Social Democracy as an

example of a class, which, as much as it may emphasise and seek to corroborate its character as the party of a specific class, still factually is not this class itself, but rather a political party, which on the one hand still does not fully capture this class, and on the other also counts people from other classes among its members. The letter-writer is a wage-labourer in a construction firm, and organised as such, just as he is also as a member of the Social-Democratic Party. That he does not describe the membership body [*Körperschaft*] of a specific industry as a *class* was self-evidently right. But that he does not choose the societal class to which he belongs, namely the wage-proletariat [*Lohnproletariat*], as the nearest example of a class, is surprising. Bricklayers, carpenters, construction plumbers, etc., are naturally no more classes in a social sense than printers, lithographers, mechanics, sculptors, painters, etc. Occupational descriptions still contain—albeit today already less than they did two decades ago—people who belong to several societal *strata*: business-owners, foremen, overseers, simple wage-labourers. Occupational differences, as acute as they may be, still do not yet straightforwardly constitute class differences. Even the most untutored worker knows this, or they have a feel for it, so to speak. Where this feeling tells them that they have a class comrade in front of them, they will in the rule address the person in question without any hesitation using "*du*", and with the great mass of wage-labourers the undifferentiated use of "*du*" is in fact so common that one hardly misses the mark if one says that "*Sie*" today is now only used among a minority of the population to address a stranger. Yet here too there are exceptions. In certain occupations, the undifferentiated "*du*" is no longer to be found even among wage-employees [*Lohnangestellte*], and frequently the boundary between occupations also acts as the separation where one wage-labourer no longer straightforwardly says "*du*" to the other. Here seems to lie the explanation for why the concept of the *working class*, which is today thoroughly familiar to the socialistically-minded theorist of social science, and which seems to them the expression of the most concrete reality, is something abstract to workers themselves, with which they do not readily like to operate. The worker who is little practised in abstraction will, so far as they are gripped by socialist propaganda, prefer to it the still far more strongly abstract term *proletariat*, since precisely *because* it is a figurative concept, they can frame it as concretely as fits their need for classification. Here they are not disturbed by any recollection of the concrete differences that the term *working class* calls to mind. Whether rightly or not, to the terms *proletarian* or *proletariat* is attached

the notion of a strongly-determined *unity of situation*, just as the concept *Social Democracy* expresses a *unity of volition*.

But what determines a class: its economic-social situation, or its social-political volition? The follower of the materialist conception of history will, if one presents them with this question, today answer without hesitation: the former. But curiously we find, as Tugan-Baranovsky points out in his outstanding treatise *Theoretical Foundations of Marxism*, a passage in one of the most significant writings by the founders of this theory that implies the opposite. In Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, the "formation of the proletariat into a class" is described as the "immediate aim" of the communists.[4] Here thus the proletariat, which is economically-socially already pre-determined, does not straightforwardly appear as a class, but rather only becomes one through organisation, which is possible only on the basis of a certain *volition*. I find this scientifically very questionable, and it is also logically hardly in harmony with a theory that derives social-political volition from one's social-economic situation, and with larger masses lets this be determined by it. Not by wanting this or that, or by belonging to this or that association does someone become a member of a certain societal class, but by the fact that they constantly find themselves in a certain economic situation or rather position. Even the unorganised wage-labourer belongs to the class of wage-labourers, that is to say, the proletariat. All sociological classification would lose its meaning if they were assigned to a different societal class on the basis of their volition or doings. Yet, given the influence that the programmatic statements of Marx-Engels exercise on socialist thinking and action, it is in any case important to be clear about what meaning they attach in their foundational programmatic work to the concept of *class*. Here, *class* is identical to *class party*, and our letter-writer can appeal to the *Communist Manifesto* if he picks out Social Democracy as an example of a class.[5]

There is another, stronger excuse for this. Classes as sociological entities do not struggle. Nowhere as yet has *the* bourgeoisie fought against *the* proletariat, or *vice versa*. Greater or smaller groups of the proletariat have waged economic or political struggles against greater or smaller groups of the bourgeoisie, and such struggles will repeat themselves, but it has never happened and will never happen that *the* bourgeoisie as a unit wages a struggle against *the* proletariat formed as such a similar unit. One can say that without having to fear that one will be belied by events. For such an opposition would only be possible after the wheel of history had turned back so far that we again had before us the closed estatist economy

[*Ständewirtschaft*] of the Middle Ages. And that is in our age of intercourse such an obvious impossibility that even the most extreme enthusiast for feudalism and the guild system no longer believes in it. Estates [*Stände*] could once struggle as closed units, and under some circumstances professional trades [*Berufsstände*] can even still do so, but classes, which are not so closed off that they coincide with these trades—neither for the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat—cannot do so. What we call *class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat* plays out either in partial struggles between particular groups, which form elements of these classes, or—in the political domain—through the intermediary role of parties, which may like to describe themselves with greater or lesser justification as representatives of classes, but are never the class itself. This lies in the nature of the political struggle, in which class interest is never exclusively decisive, and the independent interest of the party rather always plays into it: a topic that I intend to address in more detail in another context.

What is *class interest* at all? What we commonly describe with this name is to a great extent an assumption that we make in order to convert the picture of the class that we think of with it from an abstraction into a living reality. The interest of the individual factory-owners vis-à-vis that of the workers they employ is something fairly fixed, although even here the individuality of one factory-owner may frame the matter somewhat differently than in the case of another factory-owner. These differences blur together in the factory-owners' group as soon as this organises itself, but the factory-owners' group, and even the entire collection of all the factory-owners' associations imaginable is still not yet what the class concept *bourgeoisie* covers. Yet how hard it is to move even only the factory-owners as a collective unit to unified proceeding against the workers' organisations is shown by the fate of the agitators' associations [*Scharfmacherverbände*] deployed by the business-owners. Here there are always special interests of all kinds that rise up against the supposed interest of the remaining business-owners, and depending on how things stand cancel it out and weaken its effective force. The power of the agitators' associations is after all not by any means at the point of increasing. Rather, everywhere signs show themselves of crumbling, of coming round in their behaviour to the workers' organisations. Occasional relapses will not deceive the view of the attentive observer about this.

One can conceive of the community of business-owners [*Unternehmertum*] as a collectivity very well as a particular societal class, precisely as the business class [*Unternehmerklasse*], but this business class

is, as I have remarked, far from *the* bourgeoisie, but rather always only a part of it, even if also the most important part. But one will, in order to correctly gauge the interplay of class interests in today's society, at least have to distinguish between the industrial and the commercial business community, between the worlds of manufacturing and trade, whose interests often diverge from one another more acutely than the interests of workers and business-owners. Hence we find in all modern developed countries parties that one can more or less correctly describe as *bourgeois parties*, but nowhere a party that one could regard as *the* party of *the* bourgeoisie, as the epitome of the entire middle class [*Bürgertum*] that is independently economically active or finds itself in a higher position. Attempts to create parties merely of bourgeois order, which are supposed to encompass the entire middle class, have here and there perhaps enjoyed temporary success under the impact of particularly violent political convulsions, but have not managed to create anything lasting. The greater the momentary success of such *parties of nothing-but-order*, the faster they disintegrated again before the reality of the contradictions within the bourgeois world.

A party of *the* middle class was possible so long as it was a matter of winning rights for the middle class against the higher classes, estates, and corporations that opposed it, of creating what one calls *bourgeois freedoms* and *bourgeois constitutionalism*. Once these rights were won, the bourgeois parties had to set themselves other aims to prove their reason for existing, and since there is an almighty diversity of purposes within the bourgeois world, and since this world, instead of becoming simplified, is becoming ever more strongly differentiated despite trusts, cartels, and department stores, the specific class parties of the middle class were of necessity forced to quit the field in favour of other party formations.

Here one could maybe hold up England against me, this model country of bourgeois freedoms and bourgeois constitutionalism. Precisely there, where this constitutionalism was realised the soonest, and is the most elaborated, the two great bourgeois parties have maintained themselves the longest, and again and again forced back or subsumed all other party formations. Does that not speak against what I have argued just now?

Not in the slightest. For anyone who knows the history of the English party system also knows that the two great historical parties that alternate with one another in power have only been able to purchase their continued existence at the cost of continuously shedding their skins and rejuvenating themselves, and that this process of rejuvenation has been carried out all the oftener and the more lastingly the more the franchise was

generalised, that is to say, democratised. Even the generalisation of the franchise can by no means exclusively be attributed to pressure from the workers, but was rather to no small degree championed and implemented by these parties in their own interests. For over a lifetime, in England every Liberal ministry has turned out a bit more radical than its predecessor, and not by coincidence because the party leaders were more radical, but rather as a necessary consequence of the changes that had taken place in the bowels of the party and its followers themselves. Similarly in the Conservative Party. Both parties were able to keep themselves alive as great ruling parties because they relinquished ever greater pieces of their original class character, and gradually betrayed the specific class interests of their old followings—about which there were more than enough complaints.[6] Today, great bourgeois parties can in general only survive now by betraying some bourgeois special interests. And where the middle class is fragmented into small special-interest parties that carry themselves as ensigns of the altogether-completely-upstanding, then the *betrayal* is taken care of in an emergency by the government that impartially presides over these upstanding people. So it is ordained, despite all the stormy attacks on Posadowsky, by the development of modern economic life along with the rising increase of the working class in number, in social significance, and in its drive for social-political emancipation.

On the side of the workers things stand almost the opposite way round to how they do on the side of the bourgeois classes. As great as the differences are that exist today between workers and workers in their educational trajectory, the kind of work, level of wages, and mode of labour, so that one can speak quite rightly also of classes of workers instead of a single working class, then still in the great political struggles of the present day they retreat before the fact that all workers have one thing in common: precisely that they are waged employees and not proprietors of firms [*Betriebsinhaber*]. The modern worker is only very moderately interested in the continued existence of the individual business in which they happen to be working. So long as he is young and unmarried, he rarely troubles his head about changing his place of work. This certainly changes with the married worker, but the expansion of workers' organisations with their aid and insurance institutions still also takes away a part of his fearfulness about changing work, and since his income is determined by the general market situation, and today also ever more by the labour payscale [*Arbeitstarif*] in the industry in question, but not through the profit or loss of the business in which he is working at the time, the special interest

in this business as opposed to any other one, even where it exists, *can* only ever play a subordinate role in comparison to the occupational and class solidarity that connects him with the workers of that other business. It may here and there assume a stronger form and lead to actual conflicts, but these are individual cases that vanish in the mass and leave their political stance untouched. Likewise with the possible contradictions of interest of industry against industry. A disproportionate wage increase in one industry can already have the effect of provoking stagnations in another industry. But since—and as long as—it only affects workers through the intermediary of business-owners, it will not result in deeper contradictions between the workers on one side and the other, which translate themselves into the political domain.

In short, on the side of the workers, the entirety of modern development drives towards political unification [*Vereinheitlichung*]. Regardless of what doctrinal, confessional, or nationalistic contradictions may still prevail among the workers, political development everywhere shows a clear tendency to drive these into the background in favour of common action. Whether the workers despatch their own representatives to the parliamentary body as *reds*, *blues*, *yellows*, or *blacks*—where a direct selling-out of the interests they have been entrusted with does not take place, something that cannot last in the long run—necessarily increasing convergence will manifest in most of their demands.[7] And likewise, by force of necessity, the workers' party that will in the long run exercise the greatest political attraction on the workers is the one that realises the workers' interests without consideration for the interests of other classes—that is, Social Democracy.

In contrast to the attacking power [*Angriffskraft*] of the bourgeois parties, its attacking power is constantly on the increase in all industrialised countries. Insofar, the picture of political development is the same in all of these countries. But there the similarity also ends. The view or theory—whichever one wants to call it—that the bourgeois parties are also now necessarily becoming ever more reactionary is not confirmed by experience. Here the various countries show the greatest disparities. Although everywhere struggles of interest are playing out between workers and business-owners with ever greater scope and often in extraordinarily intensified form, we see in most countries bourgeois-radical parties continuing to hold their own, and evolving leftwards instead of rightwards. Examples for this are given above and can still be significantly added to.

Where does this phenomenon come from? Why instead of *a reactionary mass* are there, again and again, *blocs* of bourgeois radicals with social democrats?

The nearest explanation is that between the bourgeoisie proper and the working class there are also great intermediary *strata* [*Zwischenschichten*] or classes, whose interests incline partly towards one camp, and partly towards the other. These intermediary *strata* will not vanish as such, but are almost universally in a constant state of restructuring, and hence oscillate in their partisan political stance. On them ideological influences, historical traditions, power relations in the state administration exert the greatest influence. They have no firmly-delineated class interests, and form the field of recruitment for every party possible. Here belongs the army of officials [*Beamte*] of all kinds, the holders of so-called *free professions* [*freie Berufe*], the mass of retailers, petty mangers, and smallholders, etc. But also in the bourgeoisie proper there is no shortage of elements whose class contradiction towards the workers' movement is only mediated and leaves room for political ideologies of all kinds, and just as in the manufacturing world the type of business-owner who is inclined to engage in reasonable negotiation with their workers is not absent, so too there is no shortage of such bourgeois who hope precisely from political democracy, if not for the salvation of their class, then still the preservation of a peaceful further development of society.

With that, we have reached the second, deeper explanation of the above phenomenon. In fact, experience shows that with the power of the working class the inclination to impetuous action does not by any means grow in equal proportion. In the domain of the trade union movement, this is no longer a secret to anyone in the know. But it is also no different in the political domain. Power is, where aspiring parties are concerned, always an educative factor, because it develops the feeling of responsibility and teaches them the expedient usage of the power they have attained. From a previously-unorganised mass of workers, in a revolutionary epoch the wildest, purely destructive measures would be to be expected. But from a working class that has passed through the schooling of legislation in the state and in the administration of the communities, that is organised as a party and in trade unions, it is surely to be assumed that, even if complete political power falls to it, it will know how to adopt and choose its measures in the awareness that no societal class is more strongly interested in the continuation of production than the working class itself. But the working class has just as much of an interest in practically learning to exercise

its political power as in its organisation. But the conquest of political power, the development of political-democratic institutions is frequently only to be attained and secured through coalitions of the social-democratic workers' parties with the bourgeois-democratic parties. Hence the so-called *blocs* of left parties, which seemingly contradict the idea of class struggle.

It lies in the nature of political struggles that neighbouring parties often feud with one another the most bitterly, for to a great part they are competing for the votes of the same circles of the population, and the one is reliant for its growth on the weakening of the other. This while the general political situation often demands their mutual reinforcement. Here lies a problem that is not to be exhausted with only a few words. For political blocs there is no formula that fits all contexts. So I consider, for example, the efforts of Theodor Barth and his political friends, which are directed towards a bloc of the left, so far as the Reichstag elections come into consideration, in North Germany and especially Prussia to be a forlorn prospect for a long time yet.[8] By contrast, as long as the Free-Minded voters can be won over for this, a bloc of the left for elections to the Prussian *Landtag* is thoroughly promising. For elections to the Reichstag, in run-off elections—and these alone come into consideration for them in the North anymore—where a democratic Free-Minder is up against a reactionary, the Free-Minders are now already certain to win the votes of the social democrats; hence they would not gain anything through a bloc and for their part would also not have anything to offer. It is quite different in the *Landtag* election. Here, the Free-Minders have as good as nothing left to lose anymore, and the social democrats can only gain. So here, so far as the Free-Minders want to seriously pursue a democratic-radical policy, are to be found the most favourable preconditions for political cooperation. It is only a matter of drumming this will into Free-Minded voters. In view of their disposition today, that is undoubtedly a gigantic task, and one can certainly heartily pay tribute to the courage with which the small guard of the Barthians has taken it up.

For it to meet with success, what is also needed on the Free-Minded side is a correct understanding of the nature of the social-democratic struggle. Hence it is hard to grasp why the *Nation* is again and again always up in arms about the theory of class struggle.[9] Certainly, for bourgeois-democratic parties the proclamation of class struggle makes no sense today, since as a *class* the middle class has hardly anything progressively further left to win. Against the parties of the right, bourgeois liberalism or radicalism

is no longer waging a class struggle in the great emancipatory sense, but rather a struggle against the special claims of small privileged coteries, against antiquated state institutions, and a false bourgeois policy. It is different on the side of the working class. It is waging a societal emancipation struggle and must conceive it and carry it out as a struggle of classes, if it is not to degenerate by fragmenting into smaller struggles between special groups, which would precisely then adopt the guild-like character that liberal pamphleteers have so often looked for in the aspirations of Social Democracy.

There have been class struggles—and with this we return to the starting-point of this article and the letter cited there—in history as long as there have been class distinctions, and they will carry on existing as long as class distinctions continue to exist. They are naturally necessary and at the same time also purposively necessary [*zwecknotwendig*] factors in societal development. Their forms change with the nature of societal institutions and the forms of respective class rule. The more brutal the one and the more rigid the other, the more vehement and violent the class struggle of the suppressed will naturally be. The more rulership is subject to law and the more flexible it is, that is, the more capable of development legal institutions are, the more humane and lawful the forms of class struggle will also be, which will vanish to the degree that class distinctions are removed through the creation of socialist societal institutions, which will certainly not happen overnight.

Notes

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Faust's Tragedy—Study".
2. "Uncle" Zacharias Bräsig, a character in *From My Volunteer Days* (1862), a novel by Fritz Reuter (1810–1874) about his life on a farming *Volontariat* [traineeship] in Mecklenburg, is a stock figure representing those who have retained youthful progressive enthusiasm well into their later years.
3. Hans Wilhelm Alexander Graf von Kanitz-Podangen (1841–1913), German conservative politician, prominent advocate of protectionism and agrarian interests, often in confrontation with Wilhelm II's policy of naval armament, leading to the phrase: "*Ohne Kanitz keine Kähne* [No tubs without Kanitz]".
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx and Engels 1845–1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 498.

5. [Ed. B.—As Tugan-Baranovsky further observes from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx distinguished between two stages in the developmental history of classes: a first, where it is only as yet a class for *others*, but *not yet for itself*, and a second, where through conscious constitution as a class it has become a *class in itself*; only the latter gives it its full characteristic as a class. A habit, unique to Marx, of using certain terms alternately with varying interpretations, which has led to much dispute over the meaning of Marxian statements and in this case cannot be sustained at all.]
6. [Ed. B.—When in 1866, in the debates about the Reform Bill at the time, Disraeli induced the Tories to drop the preventative provisions they had originally demanded in their class interest one after the other in their party's interest, this was described by one of the more class-conscious leaders of the English aristocracy, the later Lord Salisbury, then-Lord Cranbourne, as "a political betrayal which has no parallel in our Parliamentary annals", and a kindred spirit, Lord Peel, scoffed bitterly that from this proceeding one could learn that "nothing has so little vitality as 'a vital point'; nothing is so insecure as 'a security'; and nothing is so elastic as the conscience of a cabinet minister". Eighteen years later, Lord Salisbury, who in the meantime had become the Leader of the Conservatives, lent his hand to pass an electoral reform that was ten times as revolutionary as Disraeli's.]
7. These colours respectively refer to social-democratic, conservative, liberal, and Christian-democratic party affiliations.
8. Wilhelm Theodor Barth (1849–1909), German liberal politician, initially a 'Manchester School' opponent of protectionism within the National-Liberal Party, later opponent of Eugen Richter within the German Free-Minded Party, after the 1893 split joined the anti-Richter Free-Minded Union, long-standing supporter of cooperation with Social Democracy.
9. *Die Nation* was a liberal periodical published by Theodor Barth from 1883 to 1907, which featured contributions from Lujo Brentano, Helene Lange, Theodor Mommsen, Hugo Preuß, and Werner Sombart, alongside other prominent intellectuals of Wilhelmine Germany.

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CHAPTER 32

Democracy in Social Democracy

Sozialistische Monatshefte 14(18–19) (September 1908), pp. 1106–14.

As already indicated by its name, Social Democracy is a democratic party. Specifically, it is democratic in its *goal* and fundamentally also democratic in its *nature*. It seeks in its constitutions as much as it possibly can to bring to expression democratic fundamental principles, and through these constitutions to shape party life itself as democratically as possible. I say explicitly *as much as it possibly can* and *as possible*, because the realisation of unconditional democracy has hitherto not been achieved anywhere.

Prima facie, the word *democracy* is easier spoken than precisely conceptually determined. Its etymological derivation *democracy = rule of the people* very soon leaves us in the lurch. Rule by the people can be realised in a way that directly flies in the face of what most people today understand to be *democratic*. That is generally known and was emphasised among others by me in my *Preconditions of Socialism*. It said there:

> As we understand it today, the concept of *democracy* includes an idea of justice, that is, equality of rights for all members of the community, and this sets limits to the rule of the majority—which is what government by the people amounts to, in any concrete case.

And shortly beforehand:

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M. S. Ostrowski, *Eduard Bernstein on Socialism Past and Present*,
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> Nowadays we find the oppression of a minority by the majority "undemocratic", although it was originally held to be quite consistent with *government by the people*.[1]

Certainly, that is still expressed in a very relativistic way, but the world has not yet brought things to anything further than relative democracy at all. Equality of rights among individuals and self-determination of the whole by means of majority decision in a free vote: these are the two poles of democracy when this is conceived as a principle. But how many modalities has the concept of *self-determination* not shown itself to be capable of, as soon as we turn to its application in practice, where the nature and scope of the body in question, its construction and its purposes demand—or, as the case may be, even compel—our consideration? If we disregard the entirely primitive societal formations that one found among hunter-gatherer tribes, which do not survive the spread of animal husbandry and arable farming, then hitherto absolute democracy has existed only in abstraction, and only as a *regulative* principle does it have the capacity for reality.

To this insight leads—or rather, it confirms it almost against its author's will—an article that is well worth reading, which recently appeared in one of our most respected scientific journals.[2] The author, Dr R. Michels, outlines—in line with the rest of his theoretical perspective—the tendency towards the formation of oligarchies and bureaucracies in states and large associations more psychologically than sociologically, that is, since psychology itself belongs to sociology, almost one-sidedly from a psychological point of view. That he thereby reaches several skewed conclusions, must be described as an unavoidable consequence of this way of examining things. His psychology itself is also not free from one-sidednesses. So, for example, he offers as evidence for the fact that the yearly new election of the party executive prescribed in the statutes of German Social Democracy has "sunk to the level of purest farce" the "barely believable bitterness" that had been provoked at the party conference in Dresden by the rumour that "a group of delegates had resolved not to re-elect a former member of the Party executive [Ed. B.—Auer] for reasons of tactics, so for the most honourable and factual reasons in the world."[3] But that is a completely unsuitable example for his thesis. In the first instance, it was not simply the alleged fact that such a resolution had been drafted that provoked the stormy scenes that ensued once the rumour began to be communicated; instead, it was only the denial of the rumour's veracity by

people whom others identified as the authors of the resolution that drove mutual bitterness to an *unbelievable* height. All the same, it is correct that the rumour itself had already prompted great outrage. But what does that prove? Only that a great part or probably the great majority of the delegates did not regard the difference in opinion over tactics to be a sufficient reason to vote off the party executive a comrade who was of extraordinarily outstanding merit for the development of the party, and who was distinguished by his intelligence and his knowledgability about matters and people. A second circumstance too that Michels mentions—namely, that in the election of the party executive the names of the people who belonged to the executive in the past year are printed on the voting slips in advance—does not prove anything against the democratic character of the election. The printing of these names happens on the basis of the proposals submitted to the bureau of the congress, and every single delegate or every group of delegates is at liberty to propose other people. To do so, support for the proposed candidate by other delegates is not even necessary, as for example is the custom in England; and the printed slip can also be changed as desired. Up to this point, Michels' critique falls entirely wide of the mark, and does not yet prove anything for his thesis.

Nevertheless, this thesis itself is not incorrect. For in our experience, the strict observation of democratic rules does not prevent, almost without exception, the new election of the party executive from amounting to a confirmation of the old executive members, so that in fact the executive represents a body of officials, whose members—if extraordinary circumstances do not apply, such as a gross infringement of duties, or far-reaching differences of opinion within the executive itself or between a member of the executive and the party as a whole—can regard their office as *tenured employment* [*Anstellung*], which they can only lose through voluntary demission or disability. Michels mentions that in French trade union circles they sought for a longer time to secure themselves against antidemocratic inclinations among the leaders by introducing salaries that were so low that they had nothing to fear from losing the position in an economic respect. But he himself remarks very correctly that it is a very precarious safety-valve. This is already because it can only be maintained so long as the relevant organisations themselves only have a low degree of cohesiveness and scope. To the degree that these organisations consolidate themselves, grow, and expand their circle of tasks, an incorporated officialdom becomes indispensable, and an official who continuously dedicates their entire labour power to their office *must* and *will* receive appropriate

remuneration. Underpaying them continuously would lead to corruption or social lumpenisation. The method employed by the French has been used both in England as well as Germany and elsewhere in the early stages of the movement, but could not be maintained there any more than it seems to want to endure in France. Michels, who displays a creditable candour, himself points to several symptoms as evidence for this.

The history of all democracies, whether it is a matter of states or free associations within states, shows that efforts to prevent the rise of professional leaders and officials through statutory prescriptions (one-year parliaments, exclusion from being re-elected for a certain time, etc.) consistently fail once the extent and scale of the body's tasks has increased beyond a certain stage—that it is then not the persons who must give way, but rather the relevant *rules.* It is quite certain that the psychological factors that Michels raises, gratitude, force of habit, etc., play a major role in throwing safeguarding provisions of the kind outlined into disarray. But all the same, technical need must be regarded as the deciding factor. Michels likewise emphasises and describes this, but he does not do it justice; he does not sufficiently let the validity of the conclusions that arise from this come to the fore.

Yet the insight that the rise of a bureaucracy is an unavoidable accompanying phenomenon to the growth and internal consolidation of communities cannot now be a reason to treat every form of bureaucracy as identical in value, and to regard all of its external manifestations as necessary functions. Every functionary has the tendency to overestimate their office, just as every partial institution has a tendency to overestimate its significance in relation to the organism as a whole. The spirit of routines on the one side and an inclination to overreach on the other, jealousy here and assurances of mutuality there, are the stumbling-blocks of *all* bureaucracies, and for that reason it is not superfluous to create institutions that counteract these potential evils. Only that these institutions themselves must again be given a different form as circumstances change. One must always be prepared for evils of the kind described, even if they do not reveal themselves for a longer time. Personal characteristics and the power of tradition can prevent many things that set in as soon as tradition weakens and the personnel changes.

To stay with the example that Michels mentions: Ignaz Auer was not a random person. One could certainly find officials just as industrious as him. But to find another man who at the same time embodies as significant a piece of the history of the party as he does, who emerged with the party, and who was so entirely pervaded with the feeling of having grown

together with the party as he is, that is something quite different. For that reason, a party executive without the men who stood at the cradle of the party as its first leaders, who first helped create the party at all, will assume—without any change in the statutes—a completely different stance than an executive composed of such men, and the proposal of a change in personnel will then be received with significantly different sentiments than those that seemed so *unbelievable* to Michels.

> A prince can make a belted knight,
> a marquis, duke, and a' that:
> But an honest man's aboon his might,

sings the Scottish bard.[4] Likewise one can say, democracy can put people into the same positions, but it cannot yet for that reason breathe the same spirit into them, it cannot lift people intellectually above the positions into which it places them. As result of this, routine easily turns officials into bureaucrats, and crafts *oligarchies* out of people in privileged positions when their number increases, and when circumstances create connections between them. The tendency for this is present everywhere. Shall we for that reason give up on officials or put nobody into privileged positions? That would mean wanting to give up on growth and development for the sake of equality conceived in a mechanical way. For there is no growth without organic change, and no development without differentiation.

How much mere growth requires organic changes, and how it thereby places democracy before ever new problems, for that one does not at all need to reach back into the history of states and nationally-organised parties. The phenomenon allows itself to be studied in smaller units.

A very interesting example is provided for Social Democracy by the recent development of party life in *Greater Berlin*, that is, in the complex of the 6 Reichstag constituencies of Berlin along with the two Reichstag constituencies Niederbarnim and Teltow–Beeskow–Charlottenburg. Around 90,000 organised members belong to the Greater Berlin party association. It is obvious that it is entirely impossible to take care of the business of this gigantic body without a well-developed administrative apparatus and a system of representation. One cannot assemble 90,000 members in one gathering for collective consultation and forming resolutions. That also applies to the larger of the 8 constituencies I have named. Consultative gatherings of 10,000, 20,000, or even 30,000 members are physically impossible, and to this difficulty arising from their *number* are

added difficulties of *space* with respect to distances, especially for the suburban constituencies but not only for them. Only the voter associations of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and perhaps also the 2nd constituency can organise complete assemblies of their members in one venue each. For the other constituencies that is out of the question: their members' meetings must be held separately, ordinary general assemblies are only possible in the form of assemblies of delegates.

But even the members' meetings in the constituencies, separate or otherwise, are too large and for that reason also too ponderous for them to be able to centralise the life of the organisation, in the way that was the case in previous times. They have rather, under the influence of space and number, had to give up a great part of their former functions to other bodies. Specifically, partly *decentralisation* and partly new and stronger *centralisation* has taken place, the one represented by the district *Zahlabende* [dues-paying section meetings], the other through committees: district leaders, section leaders, executive. The *Zahlabende*, originally only gatherings of the organised members in the individual city districts, or parts of these, depending on their size, for the purpose of delivering contributions, receiving notices, and regulating agitation (distribution of flyers, etc.) in a district, increasingly became discussion gatherings, whereas actual discussion disappeared ever more from the association gatherings. Either they deal with agitation in broad terms, where the purpose of agitation dominates the discussion, or they deal with setting the business of the voter association, and are then perhaps mostly opened by an address, but more in order to attract the members than to provoke an ordinary exhaustive discussion. The main purpose of the gathering is not the address but the business. So that even, if the first part takes somewhat longer, the second is directly damaged, and important resolutions and votes are settled headlong by their participants on their way out of the door.[5]

The founding of the *Union of Social-Democratic Voter Associations of Berlin and its Surrounds* in 1905 exacerbated this development even more. Part of the functions of the voter associations was transferred to the central executive of the Union, which is proportionally composed of representatives of the constituencies, that is, the voter associations have given up part of their self-determination to the central body, and have turned to the appropriate degree from freely-*resolving* bodies to merely *implementation* bodies, intermediary links in a great organism whose actual leadership is constituted by the central executive and the permanent action and administration committee nominated from among its members, whereas

control and decision-making is exercised by the General Assembly of Greater Berlin, to which the individual constituencies send delegates in proportion to their number of members. Undoubtedly, through this consolidation of forces, the unity and efficacy of the whole has substantially increased, and the division of labour is structured more expediently. But these are also set against not insignificant *losses*. These lie on the side of *ideational* factors. Intellectual intercourse has become increasingly *mediated* for the great majority of the comrades in Berlin. A direct exchange of opinions exists only for a small part of the comrades or for small district circles, which do not have any connection to one another, and hence also exert no influence on each other, and do not intellectually penetrate one another. But that small minority of comrades who truly interact with one another beyond district and precinct consists mostly of functionaries, who are prevented through their routine work from paying greater attention to general questions. What dangers are associated with such a state of affairs, what evils can set in there, everyone can easily imagine who knows the history of the constitutional institutions of peoples. I will not go into that in detail, so as not to put ill-willed enemies in a position to bray about mere possibilities as realities. If one wants an example, then one should only remember the events of the Prussian *Landtag* election. While the organisation acquitted itself brilliantly in the *campaign*, it led to a mode of putting forward candidates—I will remark expressly that this is not a reference to the choice of *persons*—that infringed the cardinal principles of democracy.

And yet, this organisation is neither the work of ambitious leaders nor the product of job-hungry bureaucrats or brooding system-mongers [*Systemmacher*]. From its beginnings, which can be traced back to the time before the Anti-Socialist Law, one can really say it *emerged* step by step under the influence of *practical need*. Its construction is thoroughly democratic, in all its constituent parts we come across electors and elected, responsibility and control. In its own way a wondrous organism, which no other party has to show for itself at the same degree of systematic structuring. If it only came down to *action*, it would be unbeatable. But man does not live by bread alone, and one cannot replace with brochures, flyers, and the like the value of a lively, unmediated exchange of ideas, without which all democracy is only a half-measure, and hence is constantly in danger of veering off into its opposite.[6] This deficiency could be somewhat alleviated if, as is the case in other countries, free discussion of party questions were left a certain room to manoeuvre in our party press—so, in Berlin, in

Vorwärts, if it was truly the organ *of* our Berlin comrades, rather than merely the organ *for* our Berlin comrades. It would perhaps, when such disputes appear, as again now with the ones about *budget approval* in the Southern German parliaments, have to sacrifice some of its capacity to set the tone [*Stimmungsmache*]. But would that be a great loss?

I will not go into the question of budget approvals itself here. Even someone who was an opponent of the budget approvals had to be baffled that a significant number of comrades, who after all were not born yesterday, came to the conclusion after copious reflection that they would approve the budgets, where they could have done the opposite without any disadvantage to themselves. Of course, it is uncommonly convenient to pursue a pre-conceived opinion, and to condemn anyone who acts contrary to it as an idiot or an evildoer. But anyone who is mindful that democracy does not crudely mean majority rule but also equal rights for all, and that it demands the highest possible degree of *self-determination* so as not to become warped into intellectual tyranny [*Geistestyrannei*], will prefer in the first instance to listen to the participants and examine their reasons without prejudice before they ham themselves up as judge. Not for the sake of the Southern German comrades affected by this, who will without doubt defend themselves vigorously, but in the interest of the *democratic character of our movement* one must mourn to the highest degree the way in which judgments were made about these comrades—almost without exception in advance—in the voter association gatherings of Berlin that were dedicated to the party congress. Where shall this way of addressing party questions take us? Precisely in Berlin one would have had reason to be somewhat less hasty with the condemnation.[7]

Our Berlin comrades have often been, as far as their organisation and courage to make sacrifices [*Opfermut*] are concerned, the pioneers of the party, they have in this respect made exemplary efforts. But as far as the development of the party's *policy* is concerned, then in almost all great questions they have been quite lamentable laggards, veritable misoneists or even misoprocopists, to whom everything new, every *further development* is a horror. One can understand this from the fact that precisely Berlin is the capital city of Prussia, and in matters of political progress Prussia always says *That won't do!* But precisely for that reason Prussian sentiments cannot be an example for the rest of Germany, no more than the constitutional life of Germany can be for the rest of the civilised world.

It is only a few weeks ago that *Vorwärts* published as its lead article some correspondence about the first year of parliamentary work of our

comrades in the Austrian *Reichsrat*. There it was triumphantly underscored that Social Democracy in the Austrian parliament was a "party among equals", and that it "now also has been awarded a seat on the presidium", which the party had *claimed* and would also *take up*. And it was further emphasised that this equality [*Gleichberechtigung*] was due to a major extent to the party fragmentation effected by their national contradictions, but that also "clever tactics in the parliament itself" were having their own effect as well, "which avoid empty provocations just as they do not let themselves be scared into submission by anyone". The parliament of Austria had been "democratised not just in its form but also materially".[8] That the ink that *Vorwärts* used in that edition did not turn *red* everywhere! So many heresies! And that no *radical* Berliner took it upon themselves to lodge a protest against such glorification of *parliamentary going-to-pot*. What happened to the harsh critics who proved that such an attitude was impossible to square with the *true idea of class struggle*? After all, Austria is still an *imperial state*, and its economic life is *capitalist*. It is indicative for the intellectual apathy of Berlin party life that these significant events in our neighbouring state were here received entirely passively, and made pretty much no impression on political thinking. A veritable intellectual *chinoiserie* threatens to develop here, so that what we see in front of our faces is what we see as the only correct and normal thing, but we do not notice at all how around us everything strides ahead, while we make a great show of moving our feet, but politically always stay in the same spot.

Certainly, in Austria there are other political conditions than here. Not everything that is possible in Austria is possible here. I completely agree. But the same is also the case between Southern and Northern Germany. And for that reason one should above all understand and keep in view one thing: that where the preconditions are different, the actions of one's own party also take on a different significance. No more than for any other question can that of budget approvals be established through a formula. In answering it, it depends entirely on the significance that the budgetary vote takes in the constitutional life of the country, and what form this constitutional life itself takes. Whoever studies countries' parliaments, where parliamentary rule actually exists, such as in England, France, etc., will find that typically this vote does not play a role at all but rather only becomes an object of struggle in the case of *constitutional conflicts*. Votes of no confidence, which aim to topple the government, are called for in the most various forms in *individual consultations* [*Einzelberatung*], but

the final vote counts as a pure summary of the resolutions already passed by the parliament, and proceeds without incident. And after all, it is also no different in the German Reichstag itself. Hence it also makes no impression there if Social Democracy, by staying seated during the final vote, registers its refusal of the budget. It is a mere formality, but not an act of struggle.

One must keep this constantly in mind, if one wants to reach a proper verdict on the South Germans' way of going about things. But then, one will also grasp that there was absolutely no reason for the storm of outrage that some people tried to stage. Rather, it was only liable to make a sensible discussion more difficult. Some threw the expression *parliamentary cretinism* into the debate. The term stems from Marx, and specifically from a time where our political life was in its infancy. In his day, Marx had admittedly entirely misrecognised the significance of the right to vote and parliamentary action for the working class. Also, parliamentarism at his time looked completely different than it does today. Returning to him on this question is hence anything but *radical* in the true sense of the word. It is an intellectual *regression*. What purpose does the phrase *parliamentary cretinism* have in the case in question? The South German deputies who decided in favour of the budget approval are not boxed in inside their parliaments. They are almost all people who spend the greatest part of the year in the struggle *outside* parliaments, and who interact closely with their comrades throughout the country, perform all manner of party functions, in short, who through all their activity are immune from overestimating parliamentary effects for their own sake. There that phrase is as inappropriate as it can possibly be.

Every attempt at a smear campaign in these matters is a *gross sin* against the democratic character of our party. We rightly reject it in the sharpest terms if in the state and the Reich laws are introduced by any kind of *rabble-rousing*. Should we judge it any differently if something similar inveigles itself into our party? Have we had particularly good experiences with party congress resolutions that were prepared through such storms? The general interest of the party, just as in particular its *democratic* interest, demands that the Nuremberg party congress does not allow itself to be misled by collective resolutions—formulated in advance and with deficient knowledge of matters—that want to force a minority to act against their better conviction.

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, Henry Tudor (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 141.
2. [Ed. B.—cf. Robert Michels, 'Oligarchic Tendencies in Society', in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 27, pp. 73 ff.]
3. Ignaz Auer (1846–1907), Bavarian social-democratic politician and Marxist theorist, friend of Bernstein albeit critical of his reformist and revisionist turn.
4. Robert Burns, 'For A' That, and A' That', in Allan Cunningham (ed.) *The Complete Works of Robert Burns* (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1855 [1795]), p. 302.
5. [Ed. B.—Of course, this is also often as a result of the meetings in Berlin *commencing far too late*. Berlin is a large city, but a good nine-tenths of the attendees of our gatherings can be in place at half past 8 o'clock, and also would be if they knew that it would start punctually. I have regularly said that I am prepared—and if need be I still am today—to start my address in front of a half-empty room. For I am firmly convinced that, if you do that twice, then the third time the room will be filled up at the right time. But on this point the respect for dawdling seems insurmountable.]
6. [Ed. B.—That large swathes of our Berlin comrades have sensed that themselves and are devising a remedy for it is shown by various motions that should be revisited on another occasion.]
7. [Ed. B.—Fortunately, at the general meeting of Greater Berlin on 23 August, a better spirit showed itself. Comrade Molkenbuhr set an example for how one must discuss among party comrades in his lecture, which was overwhelmingly directed *against* the viewpoint of the South Germans.]
8. *Vorwärts*, 'Ein Jahr allgemeines Wahlrecht', 25(169) (22 July 1908).

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CHAPTER 33

Class Struggle and Cultural Progress

Sozialistische Monatshefte 17(18–20) (September 1911), pp. 1164–9.

Often, when one talks with our opponents about the cultural value of Social Democracy, one receives the answer: Your aspirations overall may be all well and good, but you are proclaiming class struggle and are thereby endangering our culture. The retort to that is not difficult. Anyone who is only somewhat familiar with the literature of socialism also knows what it mostly tends to consist of. They are referred to the fact that class struggle does not need to be proclaimed, but rather is a product of the social antagonisms present in society, which depending on the state of societal development asserts themselves more weakly or more strongly with elemental force, and that Social Democracy does not conjure up today's struggle by the workers who lack capital against the class of capitalists and their supporters from out of nowhere. This struggle would also exist without it, and Social Democracy instead regards it as its task to explain it from its original conditions, and to organise systematic work and show it purposeful direction, whereby it ensures precisely its characteristic as a driving force of culture, and thus performs cultural work in the truest sense of the word. The oriented socialist is, on top of this, in a position to point to the cultural value of the organisations created by Social Democracy, whose extent and variety stand out more than ever today, and whose educative character draws its strongest nourishment precisely from the workers' consciousness of the class struggle.

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We may presume that all of that is well-known at this point. In its fundamental ideas, it is the common property and confession of faith of all social democrats. But with that, the final word has still not yet been said about the reciprocal influence between class struggle and culture. Among people who otherwise agree in principle, very great differences of opinion are still possible regarding the application of the theory of class struggle and the effects of the practice of class struggle on cultural life. This can already be shown when we go back to the writings of the figures whom Social Democracy regards and honours as its intellectual forefathers.

As it is paraphrased above, we find for example the theory of class struggle explained both in the programmatic writings of Ferdinand Lassalle as well as in those of Marx and Engels. What Lassalle's *Workers' Programme* says about the role of the working class "in the contemporary historical period" is for a great part only a differently-phrased formulation of ideas that are implicitly outlined in the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx–Engels. The *Workers' Programme* has also been described as a mere cheap imitation or even plagiarisation of the *Manifesto* by people who were close to Marx–Engels, which they also did not fail to qualify as *a botched job* either. But that is only a peevish way of establishing that the agreement between them is limited to particular ideas. The *Workers' Programme* is not plagiarised, because it tries to be something quite different than the *Manifesto*, namely a popular introduction to a world of ideas, whereas the *Manifesto* is the summary depiction of a theory. It could only be described as botched if it had not aimed to be anything other than the faithful product of this theory, which is likewise inaccurate. The only thing that is right is that on certain points it is of a different spirit than the *Manifesto*. When Lassalle authored it, he still stood alongside Marx–Engels as a party comrade as far as his political-social striving was concerned, but was already intellectually independent from them on questions in which he had previously felt himself or acted as their student. As far as our object is concerned, the difference between them presented itself in such a way that although the *Manifesto* lets a new and higher culture proceed from the class struggle of the modern proletariat, it sketches out the struggle itself without any ethical insertions whatsoever, whereas Lassalle in the *Workers' Programme* preaches a new cultural idea and challenges the workers to fill themselves with the consciousness of this cultural idea for their struggle, and to act as the bearers of the ethical conclusions that proceed from it. Lassalle is so strongly permeated by this conception that even in the final words that he proclaims to the German workers, in the closing passage of the Ronsdorf speech, he celebrates the workers' movement, which had now risen up

anew, as a *cultural movement*: "May this great and mighty cultural movement not perish with my person"—so closes the final propaganda speech of the founder of the General German Workers' Association [*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*].

It is no exaggeration to say that for more than two decades, German Social Democracy in all its branches overwhelmingly conceived of its struggle in this vein. After all, the man who seemed to represent Marx's theory against Lassalle, Wilhelm Liebknecht, was almost even less an interpreter of this theory than Lassalle, and even more ethically oriented than him. About the intellectual relationship of Liebknecht to Marx–Engels the final word has not yet been said; but the comparison of his writings with those of Lassalle already shows that in matters of theory at least, he was further away from Marx–Engels than Lassalle was. That applies precisely also to their conception of history. In Lassalle, besides his ideological representation of history, can be found very fine independent arguments about the causal connection between economics on the one hand, and politics, law, and the world of ideas on the other. By contrast, the work by Liebknecht that engages in the greatest detail with the theory of history, the pamphlet *Knowledge is Power, Power is Knowledge*, is a glorification of the cultural-historical ideas of Buckle, which differ so significantly from Marx–Engels' historical materialism.[1] And the organs of German Social Democracy edited by Liebknecht also breathed *cultural ethics* [*Kulturethik*]—to use a new term for it—far more than the Lassallean *Sozialdemokrat* and *Neuer Sozialdemokrat*.

Once the movement had got beyond the initial period of pure propaganda and had started to wage actual class struggles in the economic and political domain, certain exteriorisations of this struggle then certainly stood in rather immediate contradiction with the ethical derivation and justification of socialism. Especially in Northeast Germany, where after 1866 migration from the countryside into the larger cities strongly increased, and where, as a result of the active building work, the workers of the construction industry first entered wage movements and, following these, into the political movement, this then still very primitive element brought a tone into these gatherings that as yet still betrayed very little culture. No theory can lift up a popular *stratum* immediately beyond its cultural *niveau*. The first recruits of Social Democracy in the 1860s had mostly been elite workers, who had gone through the school of the liberal and democratic education associations [*Bildungsvereine*], and who could be described as ideologues of their class. But now a workers' element that had grown up in the countryside, where gentry [*Landjunker*] and farmers

competed to keep school teaching at the lowest possible standard, and where the scanty remuneration did not permit any cultural needs to emerge, started to take up greater space. These workers could only slowly digest the cultural-ethical content of the socialist literature on offer to them, and initially took from it only so much socialism as fitted their primitive concepts of solidarity. And primitively, very primitively did they often grasp and wage the class struggle. So it came about that for a time the justification of socialism was overwhelmingly idealistic, but its practice in the class struggle fairly crude.

Today, one is sometimes tempted to say the reverse. While the cultural *niveau* of our working class is visibly on the rise, so that the *stratum* of cultural illiterates, which is undeniably still present, is receding ever more and long since no longer sets the tone, in some publications socialism is derived from a reading of class struggle for which the expression *cultural blindness* is the mildest description, and class struggle in general is placed in contradiction to the general ascent of cultural life.

Now certainly in the bustle of modern societal life there are not just factors that foster culture but also factors that depress it. So for example, in my opinion, although modern theatre is far more refined in its means, with few exceptions it is cruder in its drama than that of the post-classical period, not to mention at all the time of the classics. Certainly, the psychology is deeper in certain ways and the language is richer in subtleties. But the sense for artistic measure and the unity of style has declined. Things stand similarly, if not even worse, with the press. In its substance today it unarguably surpasses its predecessors, but in its intellectual solidity it lags behind the press of earlier generations in the great majority of cases. A somewhat affected elegance makes room, when it comes to polemics, for crude bluster, devoid of all Attic flavouring. It is frightening with what a low standard of tone and form political and only too often economic controversies are conducted, precisely in Germany. More value is placed on demeaning one's opponent than on bringing to view the superiority of one's own cause through the power of argumentation, or on documenting the stronger position through actual wit instead of through crude turns of phrase. In particular, the coarsening of newspaper language is marked by the rampant use of superlative turns of phrase for the most meaningless things. Today, one is no longer moved to agitation by an undesirable occurrence, but immediately ends up in *burning outrage* or is *whipped up* into it, and other similar pathetic clichés that often stand in the most ludicrous contradiction to one's actual emotional life.

Today, in reality, the humanity of the civilised world [*Kulturwelt*] especially is less than ever inclined to deep temperamental changes. Our age is more nervous, hastier than before, but nervous excitement is not to be confused with depth of emotional life. Factually, it is rather still reason [*Verstand*] that ever more determines our behaviour. In that, by contrast, the press, which after all is itself ever more produced in haste, overwhelmingly expresses this external side of the modern spirit; it has an effect like a distorting mirror, which projects reality in wrong proportions onto the retina of the viewer. One should only try to imagine how our present time must portray itself in the mind of a person who knows nothing of it except what he can receive about it from the articles and notices of the daily press, and then one will grasp how much we must be on guard not to mystify ourselves in a similar way. For only too many people are inclined to form their judgment about the world that lies beyond the narrow circle of their everyday intercourse according to what they *hear* about it in the form of headline slogans [*schlagwortmäßig*]. In their own intercourse most ultimately trust only what their observation and intellectual enquiry [*verstandesmäßige Prüfung*] tell them, which are blunter with some, and sharper with others. But as soon as it is about the world that lies beyond this, even quite perspicacious people abandon mental enquiry and think in slogans, if they do not, given the rampancy of illustrated comic papers, think in downright caricatures. Yes, think in caricatures. One would not believe how widespread that is. On countless people caricatures work like an intellectual narcotic.

The political campaign has a similar effect on people's thinking. Party life in our times is rooted in class contradictions, but it does not overlap with them. It has its own laws, its own needs. The party is the advocate of the societal class from which it primarily draws its recruits, and if its relation to this class also differs very substantially from the relationship of the advocate to their client in legal life, then it still has a similarity insofar as in certain questions here too the advocate starts out from—indeed, must start out from—different points of view than their client. In making their case, the advocate is under some circumstances far more brusque towards their opponent than their client is or would be in normal life. In this way, the struggle between parties periodically intensifies far more brusquely than the relationship of the classes represented by them. For as a rule, parties face one another only as competitors, whereas classes, besides the interests in the pursuit of which they are feuding with one another, even in the bitterest enmity still frequently have all manner of interests in

common. Of the German agriculturalists which the *Agrarian League* [*Bund der Landwirte*] has on its books, the great majority looks substantially different and probably also thinks quite differently than it should look and think based on the conduct of the League when it presented itself as the *Agrarian Party*.[2] A party that represents a class represents the struggling tendencies of this class in a concentrated, or if one will, sublimated form, and will hence mostly fight much harder than the class would do if it were not politically organised. Classes know that they have to exist alongside one another for a long time, and seek for that time merely to wrest rights and advantages off one another; but in political parties lives the tendency to completely drive out rival parties: every time, they fight with one another at the designated spot, so to speak to the death.

It is a superstition that it is the consciousness of their class nature that drives parties to their most reckless campaign statements. One could rather prove the reverse. The bloodiest battles of history were so-called *battles of ideas*: religious wars, nationalist uprisings, and the like. It is likewise a fallacy that the modern class struggle will necessarily become so acute in its continuation that its forms get into contradiction with what we regard as the highest achievements of culture: an increased valuation of life and of the personality of our fellow human beings. But this fallacy is even today still very widespread in socialist circles, and starts here and there even to assume a dogmatic form. Since in history there has never been any completely straight-line development, and since the intervention particularly of backwards popular *strata* in class struggles can temporary lend them forms that belong to a lower period of civilisation—one might think of the uprisings of the so-called *unskilled workers* in Liverpool and other ports in England during the wage struggle by the English transport workers in the last month—so too for quite a long time there will also hardly be a lack of occurrences that seem to justify it. It is hence advisable for us to concern ourselves with examining the phenomena from which it draws its nourishment, to uncover the deceptive conclusions on which this fallacy rests, and further to show what fateful mistakes it must lead to if it were to become a generally-held view.

So, for example, the expansion of general treaties between the states of the civilised world, the further formation of international law, arbitral settlement of disputes between individual states, establishment of fundamental principles of behaviour towards savage and half-barbarous peoples (suppression of the slave trade), suspension or restriction of the special rights of individual major states to trade in certain countries and territories

in Africa, and similar questions of global politics are occurrences that we social democrats—however much there still remains to be objected to in the formation of authorities and details in these treaties from the standpoint of the working class—can still only fundamentally welcome as a confirmation of our internationality. That some of these treaties are occasionally circumvented is no more an argument against the development of treaty systems outlined here than the fact that factory laws were initially still very often flouted was an argument against drafting factory laws at the time. But in these days we have had to witness Jean Jaurès being branded an incorrigible chaosmonger in one of the larger party papers of German Social Democracy with exactly the same turns of phrase that once were served up by anarchists against factory laws, because he challenged Social Democracy to put in the work for expanding the Hague Court of Arbitration instead of mocking it. And in the same paper, from a side that considers itself very *radical*, the fact that France flouted the Treaty of Algeciras was seen as sufficient to denounce the demand to abide by the fundamental resolutions of this treaty (the independence of Morocco, equal rights for members of all nations in Morocco) as petty-bourgeois utopianism.[3] That by selling out the Algeciras Treaty so cheaply one is only attending to the affairs of French financial groups, who seek to muddy the water in Morocco, this genre of *revolutionary politicians* seem not to see. The Algeciras Treaty is certainly not an ideal piece of work. It is still missing many things before it can guarantee what one could describe as a solution to the Morocco question. But the way to such a solution lies in the strict implementation of those fundamental resolutions, and not in withdrawing to the way things were before the treaty was signed.

Nothing is more wrong than believing that one can most effectively serve progress by denying where progress has been accomplished. That only appears to be good practice because some people cannot dispense with believing in a series of slogans that stand in contradiction to reality. One forgets that the surest and most powerful way to foster progress is the belief in progress: applied to our object, culture only grows upon culture.

Notes

1. Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Wissen ist Macht—Macht ist Wissen* (Berlin: Verlag Buchhandlung *Vorwärts*, 1910 [1872]).
2. The Agrarian League [*Bund der Landwirte*] (1893–1921) was a German pressure-group defending farmers' and agricultural interests, formed to

protest against the agrarian and free-trade policies of Leo von Caprivi during the 1890s. Traditionally associated with the German Conservative Party [*Deutschkonservative Partei*], it ran its own candidates with only very limited success in the 1903 election (returning only 4 Reichstag deputies), and thereafter collaborated with the Conservatives and the National Liberals.

3. The 1906 Treaty of Algeciras was meant to resolve the 1905 First Moroccan Crisis, in which Germany sought to interfere in French attempts to establish a protectorate over Morocco to advance its position in the global balance of powers. This was largely a failure, as the Treaty only cemented the Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale* in its nascent opposition to an increasingly frustrated Germany, galvanising pan-Germanism, militarism, and chauvinism in all echelons of German society.

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CHAPTER 34

The Intellectuals in the Reichstag Elections

Sozialistische Monatshefte 17(25) (December 1911), pp. 1580–5.

If one wants to answer the question of whether and on which side the intellectuals are interested in the Reichstag election, just as in any political event whatsoever, then one must self-evidently first of all explain what one means by *intellectuals*. It is immediately clear that the description *intellectuals* cannot be a general predicate for the possession of certain mental faculties, as for example is the description *the educated* [*Gebildete*]. There are very many educated people whom nobody will describe as intellectuals, and who would also reject such a description of themselves. Many a factory-owner, trader, agriculturalist, plant boss, or wage-labourer can hold their own in their experience and keenness of mind [*Scharfsinn*] with many an academic, but they will not, as conscious as they might be of this fact, for that reason already deny them the name *intellectuals*. Conversely, it is doubtful whether academic education *per se* and only academic education makes an intellectual. In modern times, in industry as well as in commerce, one increasingly comes across people with an academic education, some in the uppermost positions, others—and these are the majority—as more-or-less subordinate officials [*Beamte*]. Are they to be counted indiscriminately as part of the *stratum* of intellectuals? And if not, to which group or category does this apply, and why to it and not the other?

If one starts, as is always the most sensible approach, in the determination of social concepts from the linguistic usage of the great general public, then one will after some reflection reach the conclusion that in fact the

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description *intellectuals* is not applicable to all these categories. One will not find many people who will count someone with a *doctorate* in chemistry, and who runs a chemical factory as an independent business-owner, as one of the intellectuals. But few will deny the description to a chemist who works as an employee in the laboratory of some chemical factory, regardless of whether they know more or less than the factory-owner with the doctorate.

On the basis of this realisation, we arrive at a delimitation of the concept. *Socially* understood, it excludes the business-owner, that is, those who engage others in industry for their profit, that is, people for whom the German language has created the ambiguous word *Arbeitgeber* [employer], whereas the socialist perspective describes profit-making through the engagement of other people as *exploitation*. If one speaks of the *stratum* of intellectuals, then one does not thereby think of the exploiting business-owner.[1] But no more than that is the concept restricted to people who live off science, art, literature, and similar intellectual activity, without drawing from them their earnings. Those scholars, authors, etc., who are in the position of not having to earn an income are a small minority within the *stratum* of the intellectuals. The great majority of them is reliant on utilising their knowledge and ability in public or private service, or on the open market for their livelihood. And if we do not want to draw a lower boundary, then although, in order not to lapse into pigheaded traditionalism [*Zopftum*], we will not make the description *intellectual* dependent on achieving academic grade or attending certain academic institutes, we will see in a minimum level of theoretical knowledge, which closely conforms to the requirements on candidates for certificates of academic maturity, the yardstick for the recognition of the intellectual.

So if in the following we speak simply of *intellectuals*, then by that we understand the social *stratum* of the theoretically-educated holders of higher degrees of knowledge and ability, who either do not use this knowledge and ability for earnings purposes at all, or engage in it in exchange for remuneration for their personal keep.

Now do these intellectuals have particular interests that are affected by the Reichstag elections? Anyone who somewhat attentively follows the proceedings in public life can be in no doubt about this. In more recent time, there has truly been no shortage of organised actions by intellectuals concerning their legal and economic conditions of existence. Starting with the university professors, there is hardly an occupational group of intellectuals who have not created for themselves at

least in periodically returning congresses and their committees a kind of representative body for their interests [*Interessenvertretung*]. But many of these occupational groups already today have at their disposal very tight associations for this purpose. One should think for example of the *Verband der Ärzte* [Association of Doctors], the *Vereine* [societies] of the engineers, the organisations of higher education faculties, the *Verband der Bühnenangehörigen* [Company of Stage Workers], and similar associations.[2] All of these associations come forward from time to time with wishes and demands for legislation, and if also some of these petitions belong more in the domain of *Land* legislation than that of Reich legislation, then even they are prejudiced by the latter's course. Today, less than ever before, can some legislative authority of a particular nature withdraw from the influence of what happens in the parliament of the Reich that encompasses all of them. How much the financial circumstances of the individual states in particular are influenced by the legislation of the Reich is a fact that is so well-known that it only needs to be mentioned here, but not explained. And on this financial situation naturally also depends the degree of allocation of means to the institutes in which the intellectuals are interested, just as it is at the same time decisive for the stipend conditions of the great number of intellectuals who are active in public service. That too needs no further explanation.

In a material respect, the intellectuals are further strongly and adversely affected by the commercial and fiscal policy of the Reich. After all, they belong to the part of the population on whom economic-policy measures that make their livelihood more expensive have a particularly strong effect. The price for their services and efforts does not allow itself to be arbitrarily raised, and the stipendiary provisions of employed intellectuals follow the movement of commodity prices as slowly as—in some categories even more slowly than—the wages of industrial workers. That is so evident today and is felt so strongly that yet again there are only a few people to whom one would have to preach this.

Certainly, far too few people account for the deeper connection of fiscal policy with the great general questions of public life. Herein even great categories of intellectuals are far less intelligent than other classes of the population. People who in their intellectual field of work only have a low estimation for the evaluation of higher symptoms hardly treat this and other political questions essentially any differently. They reason about taxes without penetrating into the question of where ultimately the growing need for taxes comes from, and how the various kinds of taxes

respectively affect economic life. But it is obvious that only that person will with certainty find the *political* place to which they belong who through their study of the developmental tendencies of society has worked out what—according to these—their *social* place should be. Yet no *stratum* in our society finds this a harder task than the intellectuals. One finds with them today much dissatisfaction, but this mostly remains *particularistic* or even *individualised*, instead of elevating itself to fruitful *social* dissatisfaction. The aforementioned process of the professional organisation of intellectuals carries no slight danger in this regard. If it has already happened here and there that workers' corporations periodically lost their gauge for where their group interest got into contradictions with the interest of the general public, then this danger is still incomparably greater among the intellectuals. I have already had the opportunity to observe this in my younger years. I have known intellectuals whose dissatisfaction concerning their income and subordination to superiors the worst-off proletarian could not outdo. But this dissatisfaction was socially thoroughly sterile, and did not steer their gaze onto *general contexts* but rather stayed limited to the individual case or the situation of the specific group. Today one can not infrequently observe something similar in the group actions of the intellectuals. Only *their* situation interests them. To obtain improvements for their group is the alpha and omega of their social striving. The challenge to direct their gaze beyond this narrow field onto the great generality, and not only to look up but also down, is received with cool indifference, if it is not rebuffed indignantly as an outrageous impertinence.

Now one cannot and will not hold it against anyone or any group if under certain circumstances they seek to improve their situation precisely as far as these circumstances make it possible for them to do. But this striving must not lead to passivity towards the general striving for improvement or even to fighting against it, to blocking the political and social emancipation struggle of the broad lower *strata* of society. That is not simply a moral prescription. The great majority of the intellectuals belongs to what one calls the *new middle class* [*neuer Mittelstand*]. But there are signs that the new middle class will also not remain preserved from the fate of the old middle class, that of *fragmentation* [*Zersetzung*]. Yet this process does not take place according to a single unified schema. The generalisation of the means and opportunities for education through public institutions as well as through industry, which is becoming ever more strongly active in this respect; increasing specialisation of professional branches, and the facilitation of the deluge of special occupations

associated with it; increasing collectivisation of the scientific, artistic, and literary enterprises besides the collectivisation of industry and commerce and the increasing number of collective institutions for social-policy purposes work in conjunction with the democratic tendencies of the time in the direction of intellectual and economic differentiation. But one should not thereby immediately think that the old categories of occupation are being completely dissolved. Things here go much the same as with the old middle classes in industry. These too are, after all, not completely disappearing, but rather taking on still more replacement recruits for their castaways, only that despite these replacement troops they are increasingly overtaken by the regiments of large-scale industry, which are filling up incomparably more quickly. Certain highly-rated professional positions of intellectuals show no signs of decline in absolute numbers; but they lag behind the growing number of intellectuals and the quantity of their professional work that is consumed by the whole community [*Gesamtheit*]. One can envision this by means of the development of *legal practice*. The learned judges and lawyers with their good incomes have not become any fewer in number, but their proportional relationship to the number of legal appeals and legal decisions has gone down. New institutes of judicature have emerged, in which non-jurists are active as judges and advocates. In the *newspaper industry*, to choose another example, the number of editorial positions has not gone down. But compared with the volume of reading material that the newspapers contain, and the intellectual auxiliary staff of the newspapers, it has mightily fallen behind and is in progressive decline.

If nevertheless the intellectuals who hold better positions as a social *stratum* on the whole have become more and not fewer, then this is because the institutes that engage intellectuals have greatly proliferated as a result of the growth of culture and the rising standards of intellectual life. Yet the proliferation of privileged positions has its limits. For neither industry with its continuous upheavals and levellings nor the pressing-forward of democracy are in stasis. The semi-feudal institutions, for instance, through which in Prussia a kind of *salvation of the middle class* is also pursued for certain categories of intellectuals, which besides others the members of the *teaching profession* and the *administrative service* can tell us about, are historically-oriented; they must and will fall victim to the spirit of the time. To cradle oneself, trusting in them with certainty, would mean to judge matters in the way the Bourbons did. So long as the intellectual only sees and esteems their own specific occupation, this easily

escapes them, and the professional organisation is only too suited to narrowing their gaze in this vein.

For the intellectual, the Reichstag election is hence a very valuable opportunity to reexamine their social judgments and ideas. Here, it is no longer occupational groups that struggle with one another, here political *parties* are competing, behind whom stand major *societal classes*, and which treat the questions of legislation under *general* perspectives, which more or less sharply reflect the interests and ideas of these societal classes. It is ultimately *worldviews* that contend with one another, worldviews and the societal theories conforming to them. It means here taking a stance towards them, and anyone for whom the circumstance that they are counted among the intellectuals is not a warning to submit themselves to this task thereby demeans the concept to equivalence with mandarinism [*Mandarinentum*] in the worst sense of the word.

But on which party's side does the intellectual belong, who sees in their membership of the *stratum* of the theoretically-educated more than the right to a title and certain appointments? It would be illusory to expect of the intellectuals that they feel themselves to be proletarians. When managers of industrial enterprises, university or *Gymnasium* professors, judges, and the like, occasionally say that they *are also only proletarians*, *actually*, because they are not independent economic agents [*Wirtschafter*], then that happens either in the heat of passion about unacceptable aspects of their positions, or it is a mere affectation. What someone *is, actually*, they are not *really*, otherwise they would not be it *actually*. But if the intellectual who finds themselves in such positions is not in the same situation as the proletarian, then they are still in an *analogous* situation, and for the *stratum as a whole* with its great army of members in an uncertain situation and with its bad remuneration it remains true that it, with insignificant exceptions, consists of intellectual *workers*, of people who are dependent on a labour market and all its changeable aspects.

This calls the intellectual who does not want to be the lackey [*Schleppenträger*] of the owners and rulers, if not directly into the ranks then at least *onto the side* of the party that champions the rights of *work* in contrast to the privileges of possession and birth, that is, of Social Democracy. The intellectual in the full sense of the word, that is, the educated person who has learned to think in development-theoretical terms, cannot today be an opponent of Social Democracy, however they may stand towards individual points of the social-democratic programme and how they might imagine the future state. For the *nature* of Social

Democracy does not emerge from its programme, which is itself subject to development, but rather from its nature as a representative of *labour*, with which determination it stands and falls, and from which its programme derives through application of this fundamental idea to the factual conditions and their development. But its *behaviour* is not determined by the vision of a future state sketched out in advance, but rather the insight into the carefully-researched and attentively-followed facts of societal development. The intellectual who follows these facts cannot close themselves off from recognising that the future belongs to Social Democracy. If they see how, despite all countermeasures by governments, the process of the industrialisation of economic life and the urbanisation of living is carried out with increasing strength, and that in industry the *working class* takes up an ever wider space, then their reflection must also tell them that the *social* focus must unavoidably also be followed by the *political* equivalent. It is no longer a question of *whether*, but merely now of *how* democracy comes to realisation in politics, economics, and all further branches and expressions of social life.

There is also hence nothing more perverse than to allow oneself to be frightened away from democracy by imaginary notions about the dependency of intellectuals within it. One does not solve problems by seeking to dodge them, but by tackling them fearlessly head-on. The intellectual has never and nowhere been *independent*. When the *Communist Manifesto* says that the bourgeoisie has transformed the doctor, the man of science, the cleric, the artist into its paid wage-servants, then it is not thereby claiming that these people were formerly *free* in the more noble sense of the word. Quite the opposite, so far as they were *free* in feudal society, they were this mostly in the worst sense of this word. The superseding of feudal society by the societal order of the bourgeoisie meant for the intellectuals not the transition from independence to dependency but rather a change in the *form* and the *conditions* of dependency; although one must say that, however defective the state of things today may be, this was still a step forward compared to what came before. There is no reason to assume that, for the great majority of intellectuals, emerging socialist democracy—which, as one can already distinctly tell today, will be fundamentally different from the crude rule of unorganised and misbehaving masses—will bring greater intellectual dependency. Rather, everything indicates that it will not remain without frictions, but precisely for that reason will have more intellectual freedom as a result. The organic vital conditions of democracy will raise the desire for freedom, and not weaken it.

In this regard, one can look with all the more trust to the future, the more one provides in the present for education towards freedom and in the use of freedom. But precisely these are the questions that will preoccupy the coming Reichstag in various permutations. Here, more acutely than before, the representatives of traditional dependencies and the advocates of the emancipation of human beings from the pressure of economic powers and privileged estates will stand opposed to one another. This contrast has also imprinted itself onto the election campaign this time round. There can hardly be any doubt for the intellectual who is not themselves dedicated to pigheaded tradition as to the side on which they have to take up their position in this campaign.

Notes

1. [Ed. B.—Naturally, someone who as an intellectual becomes an independent business-owner, does not for that reason lose their mental [*geistig*] belonging to the intellectuals. But they lose the distinguishing feature of the social type.]
2. The Association of Doctors [*Verband der Ärzte*] (founded 1900, now also called the *Hartmannbund*), the Association of German Engineers [*Verein Deutscher Ingenieure*] (founded 1856), and the Company of German Stage Workers [*Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-Angehöriger*] (founded 1871), are three examples of professional interest organisations that fulfil a range of social, scientific-technical, and trade-unionist functions for their respective memberships.

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CHAPTER 35

Science, Value-Judgments, and the Party

Sozialistische Monatshefte 18(23) (November 1912), pp. 1407–15.

The second annual German *Soziologentag* [Sociologists' Conference], which took place in Berlin on 20, 21, and 22 October, has garnered little attention in Social Democracy. The bourgeois press too has barely concerned itself with it. The latter is not very surprising. Sociology as a particular, all-encompassing science of societal development, of societal elements, forces, forms, and tendencies, does not enjoy a very high status in Germany. The universities have hitherto treated it stubbornly as a poor relation. One should hardly believe it possible, but it is nonetheless true that for this science, which was founded by encyclopaedic minds like Henri Claude Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, and numbers among its representatives (not to speak of living Germans) people such as Émile Durkheim, Alfred Fouillée, Ludwig Gumplowicz, Maksim Kovalevsky, Ch. Letourneau, L. H. Morgan, A. E. Schäffle, Herbert Spencer, Ed. Westermarck, and Lester F. Ward, there are in German universities only one or two official academic chairs.[1] But such is the case, and it is also hardly a coincidence that it is so. It manifests as a natural consequence of the intellectual change that has taken place over recent decades in the circles of the official representatives of the German scholarly world, and has led to the prevalence of specialisation. But whatever the reasons might be, it is a *fact*, and to demand of the bourgeois daily press what the high councils of the faculties reject would be the highest unfairness. Less reasonable is the lack of participation by the social-democratic press, in particular the

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silence of the central organ of our party, which appears in Berlin, in the face of a conference that dealt with as important a topic as that of the sociology of nationalities, and at which one of the most significant questions relevant to this, namely the question about the nation as a political factor, was covered in a highly instructive lecture by a member of the party, our Austrian party comrade Dr. Ludo Hartmann.[2] Yet in these matters *dormitat* not only *interdum bonus ille Homerus*.[3]

Now, it is not my intention, and also not my place, to give a report here of the papers and discussions of the *Soziologentag*, at which things got quite lively several times. That will probably happen at another point in this journal. The arguments of this article should also not just apply to the substance of the lectures or any one of the lectures that preoccupied the *Soziologentag*, since much timely material worthy of detailed discussion in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* was brought to discussion there. After all, to only pick out one theme, the national question confronts us today in quite a different guise and under quite different preconditions than at the time where the social-democratic concepts about it were formulated, and indeed from this emerges the need for Social Democracy to review those concepts and their usefulness for application in concrete cases. Schippel has here made fun of the summary treatment of the question of imperialism, which left no room for any differentiation, at the Chemnitz party conference of German Social Democracy.[4] Against this, it should be remarked that the speaker at the party conference, comrade Haase, from the very beginning explained that this time it was only about taking a stance towards a quite specific kind of imperialism, and quite specific imperialist tendencies, and the resolution presented to the party conference indeed also did not try to be more than a demonstration against the tendencies it identified.[5] Yet it is correct that the resolution does not exhaust the question of imperialism, and that the debate about it was rushed through in a way that bore no relation whatsoever to the significance of the object. What lies beyond the tendencies rejected in the resolution is still an open question for the party. But these are not future questions but rather also questions for our time, and not the least among them is the question of the relationship between imperialism and the needs and rights of nationality. Now for this question, much that is worth paying attention to was delivered at the *Soziologentag*.

I will foreseeably have an opportunity to go into this in substance in the near future. What prompts me to revisit the Berlin *Soziologentag* today is an occurrence that was only coincidentally connected with the object on

the agenda, and bears on the quite general question of the relationships between science and practice. It is the interruption of the Leipzig Professor Paul Barth by the presiding chair Professor Georg Simmel and the Heidelberg Professor Max Weber, when Barth in his lecture *Nationality in its sociological significance* moved onto reflecting on the advantageousness of the nation-state compared with other state formations.[6] Simmel explained—and Weber backed him up on this in the severest possible way—that passing value-judgments of this kind lay outside the tasks that the German Sociological Society [*Deutsche Soziologische Gesellschaft*] had set itself, and was expressly ruled out by its statutes. This explanation, which Professor Barth had to submit to in view of the rights held by the chairs of scientific societies, and which he did readily, prompted much comment. The provision on which it relied has been described as far too far-reaching by, among others, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. It must be a dry science, that democratic paper remarks, that restricts itself purely to the presentation of facts. And one comes across similar remarks in other newspapers. At first glance, many will also agree with it. It will seem to many as an unbearable restriction of the concept and the tasks of science if one relegates them exclusively to establishing what was, is, and foreseeably will be, and forbids it to discuss what must or should be. Would not for that reason *ethics* among other things also be cast out of science?

It must first be stressed that, if the German Sociological Society excludes value-judgments from its scientific debates, the consideration that carries decisive weight for it in this has nothing to do with any theory whatsoever about the tasks and rights of science. The society wants to rule out, from the start and fundamentally, any competitive relationship with the Association for Social Policy [*Verein für Sozialpolitik*], any overreach into this society's domain of tasks, to which we owe so many valuable enquiries. It was evidently not least this perspective that prompted Max Weber to explain in his impassioned way that he would immediately lay down his offices in the Sociological Society if that provision in its statutes was not strictly adhered to. One only needs to remind oneself how far the domain of sociology reaches to tell oneself that without the mentioned provision, overreaches into the domain of social policy, as well as other branches of politics, could not be avoided at all. Even if this were an exaggerated delimitation of the working domain of sociological science, this could be justified adequately from that practical consideration. Only that it would then simply be a self-imposed sacrifice, but not a fundamental constriction of the field of work of science in general.

However, reflecting on the theoretical side of this question does lead us to recognise that this restriction is also fundamentally justified and advisable. Only one may not forget that value-judgment and value-judgment can be two different things. If I declare that a republic is a better state-form than monarchy, or *vice versa*, that monarchy is to be preferred to the republic, then with that I am undoubtedly expressing value-judgments that lie beyond the domain of science. But if I declare that for certain societal conditions, for a certain structure of society and cultural level of its members, and with regard to certain purposes of the society, this or that governmental form seems on the basis of historical experience to be the better-suited state order, one that has the prospect of greater durability and efficacy, then although that is a value-judgment that can be wrong or right, it is not a judgment that reaches beyond the framework of sociology as a definite science. Only a value-judgment that starts out from purposes that lie beyond the domain of enquiry of a science is one that transcends it, and can hence be expelled from its discussions, if it is not a matter of determining the boundaries that separate it from other sciences or from activities that seek to realise the results of science in practice. One can illustrate this best through the relationship of another scientific discipline to the activities related and attached to it. Physiology conducts the scientific preliminary work for medicine; countless threads lead from one over to the other, and some also lead back to it. But no scientifically-working physiologist will permit value-judgments for their enquiries and observations that are decisive for the medic in particular. The medical professional ought and wishes to heal human ailments and preserve human life; the physiologist only wants to establish the conditions and laws of development of organic life. For one, human well-being [*Wohlbefinden*] is the gauge of all things, for the other it is a partial object of a functional theory for which it is in principle irrelevant whether the life in question is that of a human, a rabbit, a frog, or some insect. In the same way that physiology behaves towards medicine, sociology does towards politics, ethics, pedagogy, and other social activities. They are, as the case may be, objects of its enquiry, but what is a teleological value for them only comes into consideration for sociology as a functional factor of value. Thus, Barth did not by any stretch transgress the border domain of sociology by setting out what ethical and pedagogical effects the nation-state wields in his opinion. By contrast, evaluating the nation-state according to its ethical effects is no longer a matter of sociology but rather of politics as statecraft in the wider sense. But just as nobody will rebuke physiology for being a dry science

because it regards healing as causal or functional, and not teleological, so too one cannot call sociology a dry science because it treats questions of state, social, and cultural policy causally and not teleologically. The more it imposes restrictions on itself here, and the more it keeps its observations free of those value-judgments that belong to the teleology of the disciplines of applied social science, the better the services it will render to the representatives of these disciplines. For all ultimately need to rely on, or appeal to, enquiries that are underpinned by only one tendency: discovery of *what is actually the case* [*das Tatsächliche*] in its social contexts.[7]

Keeping science free from transcendent value-judgments or tendencies is thus in no way a merely formal or methodological affair, but rather also a question of eminently practical significance. Among other things, here too lies the strongest root of the demand for *freedom of science* [*Freiheit der Wissenschaft*]. Indeed, it is even the core of this freedom. After all, whether science is to be free of state paternalism or penal legal fetters is ultimately only a question for barbarians. But whether science is to be free of transcendent value-judgments, about this sadly not only barbarians argue even today.

K. Kautsky has defended the expulsion of G. Hildebrand from the party in two articles in the *Neue Zeit* with arguments that in their ramifications would justify every attack on the freedom of science.[8] Undoubtedly, the desire to inhibit scientific research and avowal [*Bekennen*] in the party was far from the minds of those delegates at the Chemnitz party conference who voted in favour of the expulsion motion. I am happy to accept this, and among other things, when this topic was mentioned for some reason or other in the Committee of the Sociological Society, I stressed most decidedly that the overwhelming majority of the delegates who voted for Hildebrand's expulsion in Chemnitz did *not* thereby want to target any scientific commitment, but rather a *policy*, and political tendencies. I want to make that clear from the start. The question is only whether the resolution does not in fact have a greater scope than it should have according to the drafters' intention. And if the interpretation that K. Kautsky gives it remained the defining one, this would indeed be the case.

In the eyes of the great majority of the comrades who voted for Hildebrand's expulsion, what carried decisive weight was that they were informed that in assembled demonstrations by the party, Hildebrand had thrown deviating opinions into the debate. The party certainly has the right to demand of its members that they do not cancel out its actions, especially of members who hold preeminent positions. Naturally, it will

not expect anybody to put their own conscience under too much pressure. But it asks and can ask that they do not voice their objections at such points and in such a form that they must necessarily weaken the party's capacity for action. So if Hildebrand infringed these elementary rules of solidarity-in-struggle [*Kampfgenossenschaft*], a response from the party was justified. However, in this instance, even according to the accusation, there were so few isolated cases at stake that they would have been dealt with sufficiently with a reproving rebuttal. The heavy punishment of expulsion from the party can only be appropriate if there is persistent contravention of the party's resolutions. If somebody did not have the presence of mind to keep their counsel once or twice, one should not point the biggest guns at them for doing so.

In this case too, certainly, nothing would have happened if those incidents had not also coincided with Hildebrand's critique of certain economic-theoretical passages in the party programme, and in particular his deviating views about the consequences of the global economic tendencies of today's development in industrialised states. That this oppositionality came across as an aggravating moment to those comrades who do not engage in theoretical work is understandable enough. They judge the tree by its fruits. And I can understand it all the more that in doing so they came to conclusions that were unfavourable for Hildebrand, since I too take no pleasure whatsoever from several of the conclusions he drew from his theory. But for me (and I would have thought that the same would apply to every scientifically-engaged comrade, suffused with the spirit of Theory), the fact that Hildebrand's practical infractions lie in close connection with a theoretical conviction won through *scientific* work, acts as not an aggravating but a *mitigating* moment. I have known party members who in their day came out in favour of protectionism out of sheer opportunism. The party did not let itself be converted to protectionist policy by them, but it also did not deny their social-democratic disposition. Why should one treat someone worse who comes to the conviction, *not* out of opportunism but rather on the basis of a comprehensive consideration of the economic tendencies of the capitalist world, that the workers in the industrialised states of Europe have an interest in the preservation of the peasantry, and for that reason should not reject all forms of agrarian protectionism? I consider Hildebrand's presuppositions to be insufficiently well-founded and several of his conclusions to be open to challenge. But even for these conclusions, I cannot admit that they harbour any un-social-democratic disposition.

How does such a social-democratic disposition document itself? From the protocols of the arbitration deliberations, etc., in the matter of Hildebrand, it emerges that to various comrades who engineered his expulsion, what seemed un-social-democratic was his view that the latest shifts in the global economy necessitated a restriction of how we imagined the takeover of the entirety of production by society, and that the foreseeable future would instead see different forms of property existing and functioning alongside each other: societal, cooperative, private. But to see in this view the proof of an un-social-democratic disposition means making socialism dependent on a fixed view of the future, which stands in contradiction to the economic-evolutionist theory of society, as it was founded by Marx and Engels and energetically championed against all utopian derivation of socialism. All the more interesting is it that this entirely un-Marxist deduction has found its lively defender precisely in—K. Kautsky.

In his article against a declaration—signed by Leo Arons, Wolfgang Heine, and a great number of other comrades—that Hildebrand's expulsion contradicted the old fundamental social-democratic principle that practical politics had to rest on scientific insight into facts, K. Kautsky plays as his trump card the claim that this fundamental idea implied

> only that we cannot fix our goals and the means to their accomplishment from case to case but rather must bring them together into a *unified system free of contradiction*, which rests on the recognition of the broader context of society.[9]

But what does this objection mean? Insofar as it even fits the present case at all, its focus self-evidently lies on the words *unified system free of contradiction*. For however many things one can possibly criticise Hildebrand for, it cannot in any case be that he does not underpin his demands with study and analysis of the broader context of society. What K. Kautsky would have to acknowledge precisely above all—if he wanted to judge in a scientific vein—is that Hildebrand has taken pains, like only a few others before him, to determine the great contexts of the global economy in which we live, and to base his demands on the results he has found by doing so. And if some of these demands contradict propositions put forward by Marx and Engels in their time, then this may not yet by any means make them seem worthy of rejection to the adherent of the Marxian theory. For Marx and Engels thoroughly foresaw the possibility that the

further development of society could make necessary changes in individual aspects of their programme, and precisely for that reason consistently declined to bring their demands into a *unified system free of contradictions*. For them, as a signal of its practical efficacy, the class struggle of the workers in modern society and the organisation of the workers as a class to their autonomous defence of their interests and carrying-out of radical societal transformation is enough. The *how* they entirely left up to societal development, and thereby emphasised that certain measures can have a very different significance and justification under different conditions. Countless passages from their writings can be supplied as evidence for this. And here comes the Keeper of the Great Seal of Marxist science, overturns all of this, and speaks of a "unified system" that is to be kept sacrosanct, which, if this expression is to have any meaning at all in its association here (that is, in relation to economic forms), could find its home nowhere else other than in—utopia.

And that is the selfsame K. Kautsky who, when in my lecture to the Social-Scientific Students' Association I developed the far milder idea that socialism as the doctrine of a struggling and forward-thrusting party necessarily and justifiably contains an element of utopianism in the form of ideal concepts as far as the future society it aspires to is concerned, could not jeer enough about *The Return of Science to Utopia*. At that time, his way of arguing could still provoke me. But since then, I have long since learned to accept that, in line with his intellectual predisposition, he simply *can do no other*. He will *always* polemicise like this. "He turns left, he turns right, the plait always hangs behind." The theory that he believes he is championing, according to its philosophical foundation, forbids him to condemn opposing views *on a moral basis*. But on the contrary, K. Kautsky is always curiously fast to pin something moral on opponents of his theoretical opinions. He imputes the basest motives to Hildebrand's desire to remain in the party. About the opponents of his expulsion he claims, in order to cast doubt on their stance, that they were all aflame for the *moderate* Hildebrand, but had not lifted a finger when the *radical* Friedeberg was due to be expelled.[10] Heine has already shown how little that applies to him, and the same goes for other signatories.[11] But if support for Hildebrand's party membership cannot straightforwardly be traced back to having an identical disposition, then K. Kautsky quickly has a second *moral* accusation to hand. The signatories of the declaration mentioned above are renewing, according to him, an old agitation to win *special rights* for the intellectuals in the party. And, unconcerned by the fact that the

overwhelming majority of the signatories are party comrades who carry out party work not just behind their writing-desks but also in direct agitation, he manages to characterise that alleged effort as follows: "The intellectuals should have all the *rights* of a party comrade, but *not all of the duties*. These the men of scientific research calmly leave to the proletarians." This insinuation, which in every respect was quite improper, also perhaps did not fail to have an immediate effect. But nobody will envy him successes achieved by such means. From the start, one also cannot expect of workers who have no opportunity to engage with questions of science that they will readily pick out and recognise what is awry in that juxtaposition. Rights always only have immediate significance for those who use them for their special activities. But they are in no way therefore only there for their sake. The writer needs different rights than the craftsman in order to carry out their job satisfactorily. There was no shortage of people who suspected that freedom of the press meant *special rights for writers* on this basis. In their intellectual narrowness, some did not see—and on account of their special interests others did not *want* to see—that press freedom is only formally a right of those who *write*, but by nature is at least as much the right of those *for whom things are written*, that is, the great *general public*. And one must have already come very close to such intellectual narrowness not to grasp, as someone who is practising science oneself, that things are exactly the same with the freedom of scientific discussion and critique. What K. Kautsky denounces with a cool sweep of his hand as *presumptuousness by intellectuals* in, among others, all those to whom the poet's phrase applies "whoso thinks not, to him 'tis brought, to him it comes unbidden", is a right that is at least as important for them as it is for those he has denounced.[12] As often as it has sinned against this in practice, and still sins against it, the Prussian state at least in principle has adopted as a fundamental right in its constitution the provision that "Science and its teaching is free". Yet what guffawing laughter it would have provoked if the state had wanted to write in its constitution: Science is free, but its teaching is determined by the *Ministry of Culture*. And yet what K. Kautsky endorses amounts to this fine statement. Magnanimously, he permits Hildebrand to carry out scientific work and publish results that deviate from the prevailing theory, only he should not be allowed to do so as a party comrade. He does not see that, by saying so, he is placing himself on the same side as those university faculties who denied adherents of Marxist theory the *facultas docendi*. His beloved distinction between party and state, which after all limps with both feet in other respects, as Wolfgang

Heine has so brilliantly proved, does not even apply here in the way that he himself uses it.

Science is not free if it is subject to any considerations whatsoever that do not arise from its own laws. A party that wants to build its great social goals on scientific insight about the forces and tendencies that develop in society must allow the science that comes in question for this—that is, those of its members that engage in it—the unconditional right to confess their faith [*Recht des Bekenntnisses*]. Only where this freedom reigns is the greatest probability for ascertaining what is correct guaranteed. It is hence in the last analysis not at all a question of tolerance but rather a question of the party's *interest* whether this freedom is secured or not. The party is interested in basing itself on the highest level of insight into economic tendencies.

Nobody is challenging the party's right to set down certain norms for membership of it, and to insist on observing certain rules of party-comradely discipline. Render unto the party the things which are the party's. But precisely for that reason it matters that it adheres firmly to this proposition: *Render unto science the things which are science's.*

Notes

1. David Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), French positivist sociologist of religion, stratification, law, and deviance, theorist of societal integrity and coherence, pioneer of scientific social research as distinct from psychology and political philosophy. Alfred Jules Émile Fouillée (1838–1912), French philosopher of law and religion, attempted to reconcile positivism and idealism, proponent of the concept of "idea-forces" as social agents. Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky (1851–1916), Russian positivist sociologist and liberal jurist, acquaintance of Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Herbert Spencer, influenced Georgi Plekhanov. Charles Jean Marie Letourneau (1831–1902), French anthropologist and ethnographer, theorist of emotion and the evolution of marriage, warfare, slavery, education, and religion. Lester Frank Ward (1841–1913), American botanist, sociologist of religion and social organisation, and palaeontologist, opponent of Social Darwinism and *laissez-faire*, advocate of "meliorist" planned state intervention to redress social need and poverty.
2. Ludo Moritz Hartmann (1865–1924), Austrian historian, diplomat, and social-democratic politician, consulting member of the constitutional committee of the Weimar *Nationalversammlung*, ambassador to Germany (1918–1920), consistent advocate of Austria's *Anschluss* to Germany.

3. From an observation by Horace: *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus* [Sometimes even good old Homer sleeps]. See Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *The Art of Poetry: To the Pisos*, C. Smart and Theodore Alois Buckley (trs.) (London: Bell and Daldy, 1870 [19 BC]), v. 359.
4. Max Schippel, 'Der Imperialismus auf dem Chemnitzer Parteitag', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 18(23) (1912), p. 1271ff.
5. Hugo Haase (1863–1919), German social-democratic politician, jurist, and pacifist, co-leader of the SPD (1911–1916) and USPD (1917–1919), co-leader of the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* in charge of foreign affairs (1918), assassinated by a mentally ill worker.
6. Paul Barth (1858–1922), German philosopher and pedagogue, sought to reconcile philosophy of history and sociology. Maximilian Carl Emil Weber (1864–1920), German political economist, liberal-nationalist politician, and sociologist of law, religion, and the state, early theorist of bureaucracy, ally of Friedrich Naumann and the Free-Minded Union [*Freisinnige Vereinigung*], sought to effect an alliance of bourgeois and proletariat against the landed aristocracy and imperial officialdom.
7. [Ed. B.—Herein one should recall Marx's polemic against Proudhon and Engels' against Rodbertus, wherein the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* polemicised harshly against attempts to introduce value-judgments taken from morality into economics as a science. On principle, Marx and Engels were thoroughgoing defenders of the freedom of science in the sense developed here.]
8. Gerhard Hildebrand (1877–?), German journalist and social-democratic politician, major contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, prominent advocate of revisionist Marxism, social imperialism, and European unification, sceptical of the goal of full socialisation of the economy, expelled from the SPD in 1912 for "heavy violation of the basic principles of the party platform" despite intercessions by Bernstein and Wolfgang Heine on his behalf.
9. Karl Kautsky, 'Ein Pronunziamento', *Neue Zeit* 31/1(2) (1912), pp. 58–61. Martin Leo Arons (1860–1919), German physicist and social-democratic politician, advocate of land reform, sought to bring about an alliance between social democrats and bourgeois social reformers, revisionist Marxist ally of Bernstein, object of the 1898 *Lex Arons* that made SPD membership incompatible with holding university posts. Wolfgang Heine (1861–1944), German social-democratic politician and jurist, long-serving member of the Reichstag, Minister-President of Anhalt (1918–1919), Prussian Minister of Justice (1918–1919) and Minister of the Interior (1919–1920), and member of the Constitutional Court (1923–1925).

10. Raphael Friedeberg (1863–1940), German physician and anarcho-socialist, advocate of the general strike as a key means of class struggle, member of the Berlin *Stadtrat* (1901–1904), allied to the radical Free Association of German Trade Unions [*Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften*] rather than the SPD-aligned Free Trade Unions [*Freie Gewerkschaften*], left SPD in 1907, later acquaintance of Peter Kropotkin, Vladimir Lenin, and Leon Trotsky.
11. Wolfgang Heine, 'Die Bedeutung der Ausschließung Hildebrands', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 18(23) (1912), pp. 1295–6.
12. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Charles T. Brooks (tr.) (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868 [1808]), "Witches' Kitchen".

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CHAPTER 36

What is Socialisation?

Flier for the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, December 1918.

Today there are many calls for socialisation [*Sozialisierung*], for societalisation [*Vergesellschaftung*]. But in this call, as it is repeatedly expressed, as it manifests in the impatient question

"But why not socialise straightaway?"

there lies something of a miraculous belief in the immediate effective force of societalisation, a misrecognition of the difficulties that lie in the way of doing so under the present conditions.

So great a matter cannot possibly be the work of weeks and months.

Today, where our industry is faltering, where it is battling with the greatest difficulties, and where yet further difficulties still lie before it whose scope we cannot gauge at all, because we do not know the conditions that the other countries will inflict on us in the peace treaty—today truly a miraculous belief is needed in order to imagine that if we simply declare that this or that industry is societalised, socialised, that then anything whatsoever will substantially improve for the worker or for our community as a whole in the present moment.

In general, societalisation takes the form of nationalisation [*Verstaatlichung*] or communalisation [*Verkommunalisierung*]. But these

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are not an end in themselves: they are only means to an end. This end is the highest possible general well-being, and

> **the main concern with societalisation is that we place production and economic life under the control of the general public,**

under much stronger control than has existed hitherto. In Germany, we currently have in our economic life, leaving aside agriculture, around 3 million enterprises of very different kinds. A good half of these are small enterprises, individually-run enterprises, or enterprises with perhaps one assistant worker, which do not come into consideration. Let us say they make up two thirds, then there are still 1 million enterprises of the most various kinds left over, medium, large, and gigantic. **Does anybody seriously believe that anything about this will be improved if here officials are simply installed everywhere instead of business-owners?** One must examine which branches of the economy or groups of enterprises are suited to this, which can be taken over and overseen by society to begin with best, most quickly, and with the greatest effective force, and what one will still have to leave in private hands for the time being, so that economic life in general continues on its course, so that production does not stagnate—since this, after all, is the source of livelihood for our people, which today more than at any earlier time is reliant on work.

Before the war, Germany taken as a whole was **a wealthy country**. Today, after the war, it is a poor country, compelled to pursue the same economic policy as poor countries do. Because it must import raw materials and partly also foodstuffs to the tune of billions altogether just to be able to keep the economy going at all, it is forced to export finished products. For ultimately one can only pay for products with products. Money is soon exhausted, and the notes that we print nobody abroad will take off us.

In his day, Caprivi said: **We must either export goods or people**. Now the export of people also has a different name: **emigration**. **I fear that a very sizeable part of our workers will be forced to emigrate**. But we must not artificially increase this number even more. We must endeavour to keep the number of workers who head abroad as low as possible.

That is also a reason why we must proceed carefully and systematically with socialisation, and why we must leave non-socialist industry the possibility of living and working in the meantime. Socialisation can be brought about by taking over certain industries directly, whether in the form of

state-owned enterprise, municipal enterprise, or Reich enterprise. But it can also take place if

> **the general public intervenes ever more strongly in the control of economic life through laws and ordinances.**

After all, it is already doing this to a certain degree today.

Even the Factory Law was in its day regarded by the capitalists as an *intrusion into their sovereign domain* [*Herrlichkeit*]. They wanted to be "masters in their own home". They rose up in an effort to prevent this law from entering their factories. But it came in nonetheless, it came in to the advantage of the workers, to the blessing of the general public, and to the blessing of social progress.

This intervention in the economy can be expanded further, step by step. Stepwise, the Reich or the state, the general public, can participate in the business enterprises that they are leaving in the hands of capitalists for the time being; in their profit and also in their price determination, so that monopolies do not emerge that can make prices more expensive for consumers. It has happened on various occasions, and it can be developed still further. In this way too, the state and the general public can assume ever greater rights and an ever larger share of production.

20 years ago I wrote the following statement in one of my pieces, and I still subscribe to it today:

> **There can be more socialism in a good Factory Act than in the nationalisation of a whole group of factories.**[1]

For here is encompassed the great interest of a broad swathe of the general public. What, on the other hand, does it amount to if the state has a few business enterprises more or less and then perhaps even still manages them in a capitalist way?

The working class demands the democratisation of the state, the democratisation of enterprises, of the entirety of administration, the extension of this democracy into all domains of social life, into education [*Unterrichtswesen*], into bodily care [*Körperpflege*], into art, and into our intercourse. In all domains the workers' movement surges forwards on the strength of its entire nature and by dint of the fact that it is producing ever more elements who also want to go further intellectually, who are not satisfied with achieving material advantages. That we have this spirit

among the workers, to this it is to be ascribed that with all the convulsions that we see before us, this great Revolution is still taking place comparatively peacefully—I would even say lawfully.

In summary, I can reiterate what I wrote in 1899 in *Vorwärts* in an article about the nature of socialisation:

> And so it is my view **that socialism is coming or is in the ascendant**, not as the result of a great decisive political battle, but rather as the outcome of a whole series of economic and political victories of the workers' movement in the most varied domains. Not as the consequence of a great increase in oppression and misery, of the debasement of the workers, but rather as the consequence of their growing social influence and of the relative improvements they have won which are of an economic, political, and generally social and ethical nature.[2]
>
> **Not out of chaos do I see the social society arising, but out of the alliance between the organisational creations of the workers in the domain of free enterprise and the creations and achievements of democracy struggling in the state and in the local community.**

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein, 'The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy', in Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 168.
2. Eduard Bernstein, 'Meine Stellung zum theoretischen Teil des Erfurter Programms', *Vorwärts* 16(206) (1899).

CHAPTER 37

Class Struggle and Coalition Politics

A Political Discussion

Unpublished manuscript, c.1920.[1]

When the question of forming a grand coalition once again became acute, a politician from one of the people's parties [*volksparteilicher Politiker*] declared that he considered any governing coalition with social democrats to be preposterous so long as they did not bid farewell to their theory of the class struggle of the proletariat. A statement that is seemingly justified by the fact that, at the same time, there are people in the socialist camp who for their part consider a governing coalition by Social Democracy with bourgeois parties to be tantamount to selling out the correct idea of class struggle, or at least stepping onto a slippery slope that ultimately leads to selling it out. Similar thoughts, albeit in a different form, have also been expressed by bourgeois advocates of the grand coalition, and so it is timely to examine whether anything—and if so, what—is right about them.

To start with, what are we to understand by class struggle?

The term was established in the literature as a political concept by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The first section of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which they wrote at the end of 1847, starts with the sentence:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.[2]

Yet this, as everyone was fundamentally able to work out for themselves, and as was also unambiguously set down in later essays by Marx and Engels,

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is not to be understood in the sense that the history of humanity consisted of an uninterrupted chain of class struggles. It only indicates that throughout the history of humanity, ever since there have been class distinctions at all, can also be traced the formation of more or less sharply-delineated classes, which enter into socially-perceived contradictions to other classes. As they develop and become stronger, classes wage progressively more intense struggles with the other classes, the result of which, once these struggles have reached a certain height, is a political reshaping and new social arrangement of society. In the past, says the *Manifesto*, such contradictions and struggles have played out between free citizens and slaves, patricians and plebeians, nobility and serfs, feudal lords and bourgeois, until out of the downfall of feudal society has developed modern bourgeois society. But this has, the *Manifesto* goes on to say,

> has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.[3]

Now the two great classes of modern bourgeois society, whose development, growth, and struggle of interests against one another are brought about by the capitalist mode of production and the economy that underpins this society, are, it then goes on to explain: the class of capitalists, or put differently, the bourgeoisie; and the class of propertyless workers, the proletariat. An observation that no economist who wishes to be taken seriously will dispute anymore today.

But the proletariat can only free itself from domination and oppression by the power of capital if it does not restrict itself to professional organisations for occasional economic struggles, but instead organises itself above all as a *political party* of its class, with the aim of fighting to win political power. The precondition for the transformation of society ruled by capital into a community [*Gemeinwesen*] without classes and class contradictions is that the working class has state power at its disposal.

About the how of this transformation, the *Manifesto* expresses itself free of any utopian speculation. With respect to the revolutionary measures that it argues the proletariat would take once it had achieved political rulership, it itself writes that they "appear economically insufficient and untenable", but then remarks that over the course of the movement they would push on beyond themselves.[4] They would, it adds significantly, be "different in different countries", that is, determined by the respective level of social development.[5]

Starting from this perspective, the first edition of the *Manifesto* offers ten groups of measures that it expects "will be pretty generally applicable" in the most advanced countries. Yet Marx and Engels explain in the preface to the new edition of the *Manifesto*, which appeared in 1872, that although the *general fundamental principles* developed in it *still retain their full correctness* overall despite the change in conditions that has taken place in the meantime, by contrast "*no special stress* is laid" on the revolutionary measures prescribed as their *practical application*. This section would, in view of these changes, now "*in many respects*, *be very differently worded*", that it "has in some details become antiquated".[6]

From this emerges clearly that the masters of scientific socialism wanted the class struggle of the proletariat they had proclaimed to be conceived not as a formula whose details were firmly fixed, but rather as the *fundamental guiding idea* of the policy of a great historical emancipatory movement. Whenever they were approached by socialist party leaders for their advice on questions of party tactics, they also consistently imparted this advice in the same vein, that is, never letting the tactical formula win out over the great political task. Among other things, a letter that Engels wrote to me on 23 May 1884 about the party's electoral tactics, when new elections for the Reichstag were in the offing, bears witness to this. The relevant part reads:

> Singer has been over here and I informed him, amongst other things, of my views regarding the tactics to be adopted in the case of final ballots. For I consider it nonsensical to try and set up universally applicable rules for these which, when it actually comes to the point, are never adhered to. We have great potential power of which no use at all will be made if abstention from the polls is prescribed in all cases where none of our people are involved in the final ballot. As it happens, in all such cases electoral pacts—e.g. with the Centre—invariably come into being automatically: We shall vote for you *here* if you vote for us *there*, and many a seat have we acquired thus. Blunders may result of course, but blunders will always be made, nor is this any reason for committing an even greater one. I therefore told him that, in places like Berlin, for instance, where the electoral campaign is virtually confined to ourselves and the men of Progress [Ed. B.—the precursor of today's Democratic Party], pacts *before* the general election were not out of the question—you cede us that constituency and in return we cede you this one—but only, of course, if one can count on their being observed. What I consider inept is, in effect, the attempt by congresses to formulate in advance universally valid rules for as yet non-existent tactical cases.[7]

If one recalls how far and for what purposes the proposal outlined just here deviated from the stance that prevailed within German Social Democracy at the time and still for a while later regarding the tactic to be observed in elections, one will not for a moment be in any doubt about where Friedrich Engels would stand on the question of coalition politics today. He would make the decision dependent not on any consideration of formal aspects, but simply from the prospective *effect* on the *general political situation* and *development*. That is how he and Marx decided in all cases where doctrinaire speculations and seemingly radical slogans were played off against the great political interest of the working class in the *realisation* and *consolidation* of *democracy*. Already in the *Manifesto* itself, in the section about so-called "true" socialism, they condemned such doctrinairism in the most strident terms. They were not blind to the difficulties of the policy, which they recognised to be necessary, and hence also did not underestimate the preconditions that had to be present if the steps required for the implementation of this policy were to fulfil their purpose. The phrase in the piece cited above, "only, of course, if one can count on their being observed" speaks clearly enough for this.

The centrist parties [*Mittelparteien*] that have recognised the necessity of preserving the Republic for Germany, and grasped that this cannot be secured in the long term without Social Democracy also need to tell themselves this. In those circles, they are only too inclined to view and treat the demands that Social Democracy has to pose in a coalition if it is not to give itself up entirely, as a matter of mere mood or some agitatory desire *du jour*. It is not enough to warn people off giving way to this inclination. Social Democracy has provided ample evidence that it does not expect any sacrifices from the bourgeois centrist parties that they cannot make without taking damage to their soul; hence, it *must* and *may demand the same treatment from them in return*.

One should not forget that without the theory of the class struggle, as Marx and Engels as well as Ferdinand Lassalle proclaimed it, Social Democracy in Germany would never have become the *great*, *unified*, and *far-sighted* political party *that it is today*, *to the blessing of the German people*.

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein Papers, ARCH00042–A58, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 6: Marx 1845–1848* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 482.
3. Ibid., p. 485.
4. Ibid., p. 504.
5. Ibid., p. 505.
6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 23: Marx 1871–1874* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), pp. 174–5.
7. Friedrich Engels, 'Engels to Eduard Bernstein, 23 May', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 47: Letters 1883–1886* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995), p. 140.

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CHAPTER 38

Limits to the Formal Implementation of Democracy

Unpublished manuscript, c. 1922.[1]

In the Austrian *Nationalversammlung* [National Assembly], through their energetic opposition, the social-democratic members have brought down a motion by *Bundeskanzler* Seipel to prescribe direct election by the people for filling the post of *Bundespräsident*. It would seem arrogant pretension on my part if I presumed to express further words of recognition for this. Yet the following article about the political scope of direct popular voting and the election of governments, which I authored a few months ago in response to notes that appeared in favour of them in socialist papers, but which I have hitherto left unpublished, may be of interest as far as this course of events is concerned.

* * *

From time to time, voices make themselves heard again and again in Social Democracy who argue that it would be desirable for the democratically-founded parliamentary system of government to be replaced or at least complemented by direct popular voting [*Volksabstimmung*]. It is still not all that long ago that one could read in some social-democratic newspapers in Germany that German Social Democracy could surely tolerate the introduction of direct popular legislation [*Volksgesetzgebung*].

I am thoroughly of the opposite opinion, and hence I consider it my duty to devote a serious treatment to this object.

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I want to preface this by saying that in doing so I am by no means addressing a newly-acquired personal view of mine, and it is in no way determined by my so-called revisionist point of view, which I have acquired over successive years. I already developed it at a time where I was still, to put it drastically, a staunchly orthodox Marxist. Namely in 1891, when unified German Social Democracy stood on the cusp of giving itself a new programme. In the last of four articles by the magazine *Die Neue Zeit*, issued by Karl Kautsky, that took a stance on this question, and the first three of which were exclusively Kautsky's work, besides other proposals that referred to practical politics I also discussed the proposal by the author Dr. Hans Müller, who at the time belonged to the party, writing in the *Berliner Volkstribüne* under the pseudonym H.M., to give the passage in the draft programme by the party representatives that read "direct participation by the people in legislation by means of the right of proposal and right of dismissal" a form that fundamentally *rejected the entire system of popular representation*, which was to commence with the words:

> The right of legislation shall solely belong to the people, and be exercised by it by means of the right of decision and right of proposal.

I remarked on this:

> Far from associating ourselves with this proposal, we do not hesitate to declare that we would not have found it at all unfortunate if so-called direct legislation *had stayed out of the programme entirely*.[2]

In the justification for this declaration, I pointed first and foremost to the fact that although direct legislation in the spirit of the democratic principle *formally* represented an improvement compared with the system of representation, for us social democrats, democratic institutions are not ends in themselves but rather the means to achieve an all-encompassing, more important purpose. I wrote:

> Social Democracy is in its entire nature revolutionary, by contrast formal democracy is so only under certain preconditions. On the contrary, as a rule it is rather more conservative.

Certainly, the representative system in its conventional form was "far from being complete". But the more the franchise for parliaments ceased

to be a privilege of the property-owners, the more it would develop qualities which Social Democracy in Germany today could not yet do without. It is "in substance the intellectually most active elements of the population" who led the election campaigns for parliamentary bodies, but direct legislation would place the decision "in the hands of the great mass of the intellectually sluggish, politically indifferent, and narrow-minded members of the popular community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]."[3]

"And now let us take to hand", I continued, "the employment statistics of Germany today, and answer ourselves the question of what the working class would have to expect from direct popular legislation under these conditions." A "more cumbersome, and in *every* respect unwieldy machine could not be imagined."[4] The rights of proposal and dismissal could be demanded as a complement to popular representative bodies [*Volksvertretungen*], since the doubts that counsel against it are outweighed by several advantages that this would bring along with it—but direct popular legislation, as "H.M." demands it, would be "a reactionary institution" in Germany today.

With that, for German Social Democracy, the idea was also settled. When, two years later, in France the Socialist Jean Allemane, who belonged to the radical wing of the so-called "possibilists", took it up and sought to talk the Socialist International into adopting it as an objective, Karl Kautsky rebutted the arguments deployed in favour of it in detail in the work *Parliamentarism, Popular Legislation, and Social Democracy*, and the slogan disappeared afresh from the agenda.[5]

But the discussions about parliamentarism in circles of left-oriented politicians did not end there. Around 1906, I was asked by Russian socialists with whom I was befriended to provide an essay about parliamentarism for a collected edition that they had undertaken, entitled *Questions of Socialist Culture*. I complied with their request, and wrote a piece that in broad outlines covers the emergence, the nature, and the role of parliamentarism in history, the stance of socialists towards it over the course of the socialist movement, and the problems of socialists' stance towards parliamentary governments. It then appeared in German as a pamphlet with the since-defunct Pan-Verlag in Berlin under the title *Parliamentarism and Social Democracy*. Throughout, the stance it takes towards the question of the parliamentary system of government and its possible replacements is fundamentally no different from that of Kautsky's work and the view I defended in that essay from 1891.[6]

Even today I have not taken back any of it. If the youth of the socialist movement for the most part has a dismissive stance towards parliamentarism, then this can predominantly be explained by the fact that in the country where it first asserted and consolidated itself in modern history, England, the parliament at that time was an assembly of landowners, for the election of whom only a very small percentage of non-owners was entitled to vote. So the word spread that in England the people was only free on one day every seven years—the duration of legislative periods at the time—namely on election day, whereas the entire rest of the time it was enslaved to the property-owners.[7]

As slogans often do, so too this one, which was thrown into the debate on the Continent by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, had a longer life than the circumstances that called it into existence, and was still bandied about when these circumstances had already very substantially changed.

Only once the class-based franchise had given way to the democratic franchise in one modern state after another, and socialists had been voted into the parliaments, did their stance towards the system of the constitutional state and parliamentary government also change, little by little. But since under the democratic franchise for a long time only small socialist minorities were elected as deputies, that was also a very slow process, which only took place incrementally. A not inconsequential number of socialists hence regarded the struggle at the ballot box only as a temporary remedy, and by contrast held fast to the view that they would only reach the realisation of socialism through entirely different means.

What were these means?

For some, for a long time Wilhelm Liebknecht among them, revolutionary violence after the example of the radical Jacobins in the great French Revolution. For others, the realisation of extreme democracy through direct popular legislation.

The German socialist M. Rittinghausen had defended the latter view for a considerable time in pamphlets that were widely-circulated within Social Democracy of the Eisenach Programme, led by Bebel and Liebknecht, and influenced the thinking of a great part of its members.[8] Rittinghausen appealed to the fact that direct legislation was no utopia, but rather had long existed in several cantons in Switzerland, and worked very well—and apart from this, that the people's right of proposal and right of dismissal were embodied in the federal constitution of the Confederation, which was agreed in 1848 by a great majority of the Swiss people. That sounded very tempting, and at the time misled many party

comrades, my humble self among them, to see in unlimited direct legislation the democratic ideal that we should aspire to. We did not know that in Switzerland it only took place in a few quite small cantons and demicantons miles away from world intercourse, whose administration can be overseen without difficulty, and hardly faces any profound problems. Any reflection that gets to the bottom of things would then also suggest that, in order to generalise it in line with Rittinghausen's proposal, one would have to, as it says in my pamphlet,

> reduce states and communities to territories of minute scale, or break them up into the smallest entities—an idea that is entirely impossible to square with the present conditions of production and intercourse.[9]

Direct popular voting as a complement and, if need be, control over popular representative bodies does not meet with any insurmountable technical difficulties, but serious political concerns speak against it precisely in Germany today. I can only repeat here what I already wrote in 1891 about it, more than a lifetime ago: "It places decisions in the hands of the great mass of the intellectually sluggish, politically indifferent, and narrow-minded members of the popular community."

But who influences this mass? To the least degree the speakers at meetings, since only few of them can be bothered to attend meetings, and those who do so are after some top-billing names [*Reklamehelden*] or other. Most of them acquire their instruction through their paper, and the paper that they read is in the great majority of cases one or other of those news-reporting papers [*Neuigkeitsmelder*] that under the slogan of "impartiality" are politically nailing shut [*Vernagelung*] people's minds.[10] The greatest part of these papers in Germany today is partly in their content, partly completely the property of financiers and capitalist industrialists, of whom the most influential is Herr Alfred Hugenberg, who by himself controls the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* and its subsidiaries, along with a very considerable number of papers of this kind.[11]

It has already been pointed out by various people that this piling-up of newspapers in the hands of those sorts of capitalists can under some circumstances become a great danger for Germany. But I believe that in its full scope it has as yet only been grasped by very few people. It would reveal itself in its whole gravity if the people were called on to take a stance towards a major political crisis, which can be presented to it as a *decision about war and peace*. However little appetite the majority of the German

people has for war, precisely its unpolitical elements can just as easily be whipped up to war demonstrations if they are sold tales of Germany being under threat and its *honour* being at stake. It happened, in speculation on this intellectual tendency, that recently nationalist papers raised the demand to have the flag question be decided by *popular referendum*. Yet they were not completely sure of their cause, and in normal times they would also probably have failed with this quite badly. But in times of acute tension in foreign policy, speculations of this kind are not entirely without prospects of success. One should remember Bismarck's successes in the 1887 elections under the French scare, and Bülow's "Hottentot elections" of 1907. In both elections, Social Democracy mustered substantially higher vote numbers compared to the previous elections, and despite this in both of them it suffered significant losses in seats, because its enemies had succeeded, by appealing to blinkered instincts, in bringing to the ballot box disproportionately large percentages of the otherwise passive elements.

Anyone who lived through these elections and saw what great parts of the people still are not led in their political conduct by meticulous considerations but rather by mere *moods*, will not possibly take lightly the question of direct popular legislation. In this it is after all not a matter of a few seats more or less, although this too can be a very, very fateful matter for the destiny of the people. Instead, it will often be about decisions of the greatest importance for the development of social life. Elected deputies are certainly not infallible, and the majority of them act under the influence of class prejudices and all manner of special interests. But they act on the basis of reports and deliberations that enable them to give a far-sighted verdict, and in the awareness of the great responsibility that rests on them. That is the case with only the fewest individuals in a population of millions. Where this responsibility is divided among millions, individuals barely feel it, and are hence always inclined to indulge their mood if not their *whimsy*. As a result of this, the larger the country is, the more easily a popular referendum comes down to a *game of chance*, even in the most important questions.

To many people, it seems so worth aspiring to as a political institution because, to repeat my statement above, at least from the perspective of the democratic principle it signifies a *formal* advance beyond the representative system. But in this, they overlook the significant experience that Ferdinand Lassalle once summarised in the statement that even the most correct principle, taken to extremes, becomes a *nonsense*. But that precisely

is true of the idea of introducing direct popular legislations where the conditions required for it—the consolidation of the democratic foundations of national existence [*nationales Dasein*] and of democratic thinking among the people—are not yet present.

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein Papers, ARCH00042–A49, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
2. ——[Eduard Bernstein], 'Der Entwurf des neuen Parteiprogramms IV', *Neue Zeit* 9/2(52) (1891), p. 816.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 817.
5. Karl Kautsky, *Der Parlamentarismus, die Volksgesetzgebung, und die Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart: J.G.W. Dietz, 1893).
6. Eduard Bernstein, *Parlamentarismus und Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: Pan-Verlag, 1906).
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, Victor Gourevitch (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), III.15.
8. Moritz Rittinghausen (1814–1890), German lawyer, political economist, political theorist, and social-democratic politician, in 1869 co-founder of the "Eisenacher" Social-Democratic Workers' Party [*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*], influential advocate of direct democracy on socialist grounds, championed by Victor Hugo, criticised variously by Louis Blanc, Karl Marx, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.
9. Bernstein, *Parlamentarismus und Sozialdemokratie*, p. 34.
10. In the manuscript, Bernstein originally uses the term *Volksverdummung* [stultification of the people], but ultimately opts for a more metaphorical choice of imagery.
11. Alfred Ernst Christian Alexander Hugenberg (1865–1951), German mining and armaments magnate, media entrepreneur with dominant control over the press in the Weimar Republic, and antisemitic and national-conservative politician, significant bourgeois trailblazer for Nazism within the Weimar Republic, co-founder (1918) and leader (1928–1933) of the DNVP, first Minister for the Economy (1933) under Adolf Hitler.

CHAPTER 39

Idea and Interest in History

Draft for a magazine article, 1928.[1]

> I first wrote the present essay as the opening lecture for the winter semester 1923–4 at Humboldt-University in Berlin. Its publication in this magazine is taking place because the essay also raises the question of one's approach to history, which is still disputed today, and precisely by discussing the driving forces that underpin it, this essay may prompt refreshing analysis of it. *The author.*

Examining the question of the influence of ideas and interests in history leads into the domain of work of the two great branches of science that are known by the names *philosophy of history* and *sociology*. One could also refer to ethnology—the study of peoples [*Völkerkunde*]—and *Völkerpsychologie* [ethnic psychology], founded by Lazarus and Steinthal—the special study of the inner life [*Seelenleben*] of peoples.[2] But these branches of knowledge lie in a subordinate relationship to the other two. They address specific questions of the larger domain of knowledge that the others encompass.

Now where philosophy of history and sociology themselves are concerned, there are wide-ranging differences of opinion among learned experts about their relation to one another. However, going into these more closely would lead us too far away from our object. For that reason, let me here in all brevity only make the following remark. As far as their content goes, philosophy of history and sociology are almost identical. Anything that belongs to one of these two disciplines is also an object of

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the other, or fits into it. The difference between them is essentially one of *method* and of the *manner of observation*, one can also say, of *emphasis*. Sociology deals with the same material as the philosophy of history, but whereas the latter aims to establish the laws and forces of history in general, the former preoccupies itself with it from a certain perspective, namely, as its name already indicates, from the perspective of the nature, the purposes, and the laws of development of human societies. It is the younger of the two disciplines. The beginnings of the philosophy of history reach far back into Antiquity. But sociology as a separate science is not yet a hundred years old. It was around the middle of the nineteenth century that Auguste Comte, the founder of positivist philosophy and student of the brilliant French social reformer and philosopher of history Saint-Simon, elaborated the science of society into an entire theoretical system and gave it the name sociology. His system has been subject to many challenges, and has today been generally abandoned. Nevertheless, that does not detract from his achievement of having systematised the examination of the connections between the foundations of societal life for the first time, and given considerable impetus to research in this domain.

Both philosophers of history and sociologists have now much concerned themselves with the question of which drives in the human being exercise a particular influence on societal development. In this, it is to a high degree a matter of inadvertent or, perhaps better put, unintended effects on societal development. When going about their business, the individual thinks only in the rarest moments of how it might affect this development. Since they are rooted in the nature of human beings, which comprises component elements that are the same in their essential character, drives are something generally shared. They appear more strongly or weakly in certain individuals, they can in special cases be fully overpowered by other drives, but most of them in embryonic form are there in all human beings. Of course, there are also drives that are unique to particular individuals, but most of them are almost entirely irrelevant for societal development. For instance, it might happen that with people in a higher position of power, the drive to assert themselves assumes such forms that it becomes a peculiar distinguishing feature. But nothing of what the history of people to whom this pertained has to report suggests any impact worth noting on the development of society. The individualistic caesarist mania, “power tantrums”, as one could call this drive, is sociologically unfruitful. It can in some circumstances change states—in most cases it

tends to destroy them—but the state of societal development does not suffer any substantial change from it.

It is quite different with drives of a general nature. Because they affect the great majority, they also have in one way or another an inhibiting or expediting effect on societal development. The French sociologist G. Tarde has shown this via the drive to imitate, which is more weakly or strongly immanent in all people.[3] And even if he thereby also lets himself get carried away into frightful exaggerations, he has still indisputably proven that this drive has influenced and still influences societal development to a high degree. Likewise with a whole further series of other drives.

However, with human beings, acting under the influence of drives is only in part purely compulsive action. In most cases, with them the drive only becomes an inducement to action after it has entered their *consciousness*. But in action with consciousness, the human being is guided by intellectual forces, and the two most significant of these forces are *idea* and *interest*.

I must here abstain from analysing them in detail. Only some remarks seem to me to be indispensable. One will readily grasp that both forces assert themselves in various forms and with differing degrees of force. With the individual as well as in the history of humanity, they undergo their own development. *Prima facie*, they appear so weak that the action they cause still overwhelmingly appears to be compulsion. The idea in its elementary form coincides with the simplest operation of the function of the mind [*Geist*], which in philosophy one calls the mental image [*Vorstellung*]. Only very gradually do ideas come about on the basis of the collective operation of a series of such images. What seems to us to be the simplest idea is always already a very complicated mental procedure. And similarly with interest, which, where it enters into our consciousness, has a series of imaginary representations as its precondition to an even greater degree. There is, of course, also interest that is unrecognised, and not felt as such, but we have nothing to do with that in this context. As a motive for action, that interest only has an effect insofar as it enters into our consciousness or at least is felt. Consciousness or feeling is, as everyone knows, here so much the decisive factor that, even where an actual interest is not present, the presence of a merely imagined interest is already enough to prompt action. In the history of humanity, besides drives with elemental effects, consciousness or felt interest is *prima facie* the determinant force of the human being that produces them.

Now at the start of the history of humankind lies the transition to animal husbandry and arable farming, the first forms of the human being's impact on nature. For neither the gathering of fruits or roots nor hunting and fishing in their most elementary forms—these first methods of acquiring nourishment by humans in their natural state—are attempts to make nature itself serve us as a force. Yet from another perspective they are significant for the development of humanity. They create the motivation to bring into use equipment, be it for the purpose of storage, or for support in digging, fishing, or hunting; and such equipment is the predecessor of the tool, with the manufacture and usage of which humans finally exit their animal state. Only the tool, which makes possible and eases for human beings the manipulation of nature, in that with its help they can make the ground bring forth more or better produce than it would otherwise do, elevates them above the animals once and for all.

But it is clear that humans could only proceed to creating tools on the basis of intellectual motives, and specifically for that was needed not only the idea but also interest. Without the idea, that is, without a conception of the use of the tool, humans in their natural state would never have gone on to expend labour on the manufacture of tools, and the interest in this use lent the idea the strength to act as a motive. Idea and interest in this collaborative effort stand at the cradle of human civilisation, and determine its development for a long time. Their cooperation was necessary to cause the formation of *articulated language*, which in the first instance we must still imagine as very underdeveloped. This led to the situation that life in unruly hordes made way for life in ordered tribes. This is evidently to be credited for the fact that humans reached the point of creating fire themselves, one of the most significant inventions in the history of humankind. The first pieces of equipment, the first tools, language, fire, the life in large tribes—these mark material as well as also intellectual phases in the development of humanity, and only with human beings who avail themselves of articulated language can we think of the rise of ideas that have no connection with interest, and in some circumstances even contradict it.

One of the first occasions for this may have been provided by emotional stirrings such as love, which one certainly should not imagine in a novelistic way, but which, starting out from the love of a mother for her child, which is also to be found with the most human-like animal, the ape, may, as a result of more developed collective life, have also set in among people of the same age. Superstition, which is so widespread among savages, is also such a case, insofar as it does not itself already have to be regarded as

a form of idea. For superstition can only arise where humans make for themselves imaginary representations of supernatural powers. By working *on* nature, humans are prompted to reflect *about* nature. For humans engaged in agriculture, the changing of the seasons and shifts in the weather take on a quite different importance than for gatherers, fishers, and hunters. The rise of concepts of right already presupposes a higher civilisation; with primitive peoples [*Naturvölker*], ethical customs occupy the place of morality. With them, an action is judged according to whether it conforms to custom, but custom is elaborated on the basis of imaginary conceptions that often have no or only very loose connection with the interest that rests on imagined use or personal advantage. One might think of the *food taboos* associated with *totemism*, the animalistic cult of primitive peoples, which forbid the members of the tribe or people from eating the meat of the animal that forms the tribe's totem—i.e., after which it calls itself—or of the institution of *blood feuds* and more besides.

For the purpose of blood feuds, the clans and later the tribes in which primitive peoples lived for a long time subjected themselves to the greatest sacrifices, unconnected to interest of any such kind. It has led to entire feuds between tribes, to enmities that continued from generation to generation, and still continued to have an effect after the event or the deed that created the desire for vengeance had long since forfeited its immediate effective force on people's dispositions, and merely inherited memory of them served to maintain their origin.

According to Homeric legend, the motivating reasons that provoked the Greek tribes in the twelfth century BC to unified war against the Minor Asian Troy were related to blood feuds too. It was believed for a long time that in this legend one should see merely a poetic dressing-up of battles waged for the sake of very prosaic interests, namely the conquest of settlements to the East in Asia Minor. Yet the excavations of Heinrich Schliemann in the place where, according to tradition, Troy once stood, lead us to assume that it was based on a real event.[4] However, this is not to say that the war against Troy really had as its cause the desire to exact vengeance for the abduction of one of the Spartan leader's favourite wives, and to retrieve her. What the actual cause was is unlikely ever to be solved. But to conclude straightforwardly from the fact of those conquests that these were the purpose of that war from the outset is a method of historical explanation that must be rejected for being far too one-sided.

But it is fairly widespread in Germany. Many believe that they are proceeding in the spirit of the materialistic conception of history developed

by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels if they let economic interest baldly parade around like this as the determinant drive of historical events. But that is a great error. Marx–Engels' theory of history sees in the *economic level*, that is, in the respective *mode of production* of material commodities of life and the nature of its *means of production*, the deciding factor of the development and transformation of human societies, their culture, their political constitution, their concepts of right and legal institutions, as well as their ideology in general. But it does not say that the economic *motive* plays this historical role. On the contrary, Marx and Engels stress very energetically that this motive only comes into secondary consideration for the great historical development with which they are dealing. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence", Marx writes in a point that has now become famous, "but their social existence that determines their consciousness".[5] And somewhat later he says in the same place that in the case of societal revolutions one must "always […] distinguish between the material transformation of the economic *conditions of production*, […] and the […] *ideological forms* in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out".[6] How that is to be understood, Friedrich Engels has outlined more precisely on several occasions. He emphasises that political and legal institutions, as well as ideologies of the most varied kind, have an impact on the trajectory of historical struggles, and in many cases "principally" determine their *form*. Countless cross-cutting forces, an entire group of parallelograms of force respectively worked together to cause a historical event, and since what every individual or every group wants is hindered by every other one, what ultimately comes out is something that nobody actually ever wanted or at least wanted in this way. Thus, they do not misrecognise motives guided by consciousness, but reveal the limitation of their historical effect. The results of the historical workings of the many forces, guided by more or less consciously working wills, should be regarded as the product of a "power that works as a whole unconsciously and involuntarily".

With that, the influence of the various kinds and expressions of *will* on historical happenings is identified as a *problem* posed to the philosophy of history, but it is not *dogmatically* set down for any one of the motivating reasons for human activity. That economic interest—the concern for food, shelter, and clothing, and the striving to *possess* sources of food, etc., as well as for personal enrichment in general—is one of the most significant of these motivating reasons, was well-known to the founders of the material conception of history, and was scrupulously acknowledged by them.

But this is not an insight that they were the first to establish. The English and French literature of the eighteenth century features plenty of treatises that defend this idea and offer proofs of it. It lies at the heart of the theory of economic liberalism which found its classical representatives in France in the school of the Physiocrats, in England in Adam Smith and his school. Their doctrine was that the actuation of individuals' acquisitiveness [*Erwerbssinn*] offered the surest guarantee for achieving general welfare, and hence should be kept as free as possible of all legal inhibitions. To it conforms the slogan propagated by the Physiocrats: *Laisser-faire, laisser-passer, le monde va de lui-même* (let do, let pass, the world goes on by itself); and the verse in Schiller's mocking poem "The Philosophers" is suffused with its spirit:

> Meanwhile, until earth's structure vast
> Philosophy can bind at last,
> 'Tis she that bids its pinion move,
> By means of hunger and of love![7]

Indeed, Bernard de Mandeville, an English author of French origin from the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, gave his 1706 work *The Fable of the Bees* the subtitle "Private Vices, Publick Benefits", and accordingly declared vice to be just as necessary for the flourishing of the state as hunger was for the flourishing of the individual, and by contrast philosophical virtue to be an invention by deceivers. The most radical of the German works that belong to this genre is doubtless the somewhat infamous treatise *The Ego and Its Own* by Max Stirner (Kaspar Schmidt), one of the Berlin "Free Ones" with whom Karl Marx consorted during his time studying in Berlin, but the unfruitfulness of whose radicalism, taken to its most extreme form, he soon saw through. (Refutation *Saint Max.*)[8] And finally one further work should be named, which belongs to a more recent time, and leads directly over onto our object. It is the work *Egoism and Civilisation* by Oswald Köhler, which appeared in 1883 with Dietz in Stuttgart, and among other things wants to prove that "the commandment of social love is unfruitful and disadvantageous", and that by contrast the realisation of one's own interest has to count not only as the strongest cultural factor, but also as the condition of the highest possible level of peace in society.[9] Less designed to baffle the reader with cynical and paradoxical comments than Stirner's piece, and also less inclined than it to play around with concepts, it still shares with it the mistake of fighting

against views that no reasonable human being holds on the basis of an arbitrarily extreme interpretation of concepts, and proving propositions that do not require any proof among reasonable people, and on the other hand ignoring facts that contradict the doctrine they establish.

Let us take the concept of *interest*. We have seen above that people, where they do not act purely compulsively, would not act without the impulse of interest at all. Only that interest can be of very various kinds. It can be an intellectual interest, determined by ideas that have nothing to do with personal advantage, and a material interest, an interest directed towards personal advantage. Now saying that only interests of the latter kind have brought humanity forwards means claiming something that is disproved by history on all sides. Already relatively soon after they had left horde life, humans organised into tribes developed a sense of solidarity that is no longer the purely instinctive feeling of belonging-together, and still led them in certain cases to voluntarily subordinate their own interest to the interest of preserving the tribe, or giving it up entirely. Without this social sense, the tribe would only lead a weakened existence, and easily succumb to every attack from the outside. But to the degree that it is present, it raises the tribe's capacity for resistance and in wars between one tribe and another assures with the greatest probability victory to the one that most strongly inspires its members. *Mutatis mutandis* in their conditions, something similar happens later in state life. In the rise of states, the formation of particular societal classes with different interests comes about, along with struggles among these classes caused by the contradictory nature of their interests. But here too there is no lack of cases where the firmer continuance and greater outward unfolding of forces by the general community—be it the class or the state—depends on the subordination of one's own interest to that of the general community. And not all conflicts of interest between classes are brought to a decision by brutal struggles. Concepts of right and legal institutions develop that make it possible to resolve them without recourse to brutal violence. All the same, the expansion of these concepts and institutions does not come about without the sponsorship of interests. Yet these latter interests are of a far more social kind than personal interest.

So when Köhler writes on p. 24 of his book: "What gravity is in the cosmos, feeling and the interest that proceeds from it are in the organic world", then that is unquestionably correct, with the caveat that instead of "organic world" it should read "animal world". And when he appends to the word interest the phrase "or dependency on pleasure, happiness, and

life", then one can also subscribe to this if need be. Yet in the examples by which he wants to illuminate and prove this, he speaks alternately about interests of entirely different kinds, so that on closer examination his thesis dissolves into conceptlessness. The concept of *egoism* suffers from the same mistake with him. He uses it without differentiation for every assertion of the self, now in the sense of the self's natural care for food, shelter, and pleasure, now in the sense of *self-interest*, that is, concern for one's own self to the exclusion of the interest of others or even against it. That allows him to say on p. 26: "All culture, everything that we possess in terms of civilisation, of intellectual and material property, insofar as it is a question of human activity, is caused or prompted by egoism and interests." But then it says nothing more than that all culture, etc., only became possible because human beings are *personal beings* [*persönliche Wesen*]. It makes his entire reasoning worthless. Like Stirner, he still entirely owes us the proof of what he should prove according to his thesis.

One can only avoid such mistakes if one applies the concepts one is talking about either only in a quite strongly-constricted, unequivocal sense, or, where linguistic usage makes this impossible, shores up this unambiguity through a carefully-chosen adjective. We have to remain aware of this if we pose the question of the relationship of idea and interest in history. Of ideas, only those come into consideration that want to or can influence human action in one way or another, and the interests with which their advocates and representatives have to reckon are ones of either an intellectual or a material nature. Of the latter, undoubtedly the furthest-spread, because it affects all human beings, is *economic* interest, which, it should be added, is tightly interwoven with property interest, even if it is not unconditionally tied to it. It is also the interest that in history gets into conflict the most easily with the idea, and in the long term is the most strongly opposed to it.

At the start, we saw in the example of superstition how at certain stages of civilisation this has the strength to place boundaries on the perception of economic interests. The religions of the Everafter [*Jenseitsreligionen*], which stem from a higher insight into the world, are capable of doing the same, for which history offers a wealth of examples, to the degree that their belief system lies close to superstition. But those who elaborate the cultural prescriptions of the religious communities in question mostly already take care not to impose any seriously endangering compulsion on the economic interests and needs of the members of their congregation. Where they do not do so, or where the Everafter element of their belief

becomes refined, its capacity to inhibit economic interest declines. A situation that at the close of the Middle Ages, when the needs of the economy increased, substantially contributed to generalising movements towards the Reformation.

Superstition and the cruder religions of the Everafter are rooted more in the psyche [*im Seelischen*] than in the intellect [*im Geistigen*]. That often gives them a particular effective force compared with material interests. Likewise, ideas have all the more of this force the more they speak to someone's temperament [*Gemüt*] and are able to set this in motion. Something that speaks merely to one's reason [*Verstand*] is hard to assert vis-à-vis material interest. Many ideas in history have only made an impact once a threshold number of elements coincided whose temperaments were disposed in favour of them on account of their social situation.

Up to a certain point, the history of the socialist idea provides an example for this. As an idea, socialism is fairly old, insofar as Classical Antiquity produced thinkers who proclaimed it in an appropriate guise. And from epoch to epoch, people can be found again and again who take up this intellectual thread and spin it further. From time to time, the intellectual atmosphere was so favourable to it as an idea that entire sects dedicated themselves to its cultivation and tried to implement it in practice. One such era was the age of the emergence of Christendom in Rome, another in the Latin world the age of the Renaissance, and in all of Central Europe that of the Reformation, others the seventeenth century in England and the eighteenth century in France. But either these movements tailed off again after some time of apparent flowering, or they were succeeded by movements which, by giving shape to some of their ideas in a form adjusted to their conditions, themselves deprived them of the strength to retain their hold over people's minds in the longer term.

Christendom in the first centuries of its emergence underwent just such a sideways movement in its socialism. It has frequently been presented as originally a wholly socialist movement, which later became deformed. Yet I agree with those who consider this to be misguided and take the view that it was only ever a social-ethical movement right from the start. In any case, it has been like this for by far the greatest time of its existence, and must be regarded as evidence for the fact that ideas can make history.

The book of the history of Christendom manifests all manner of dark sides, but is nonetheless a reliable record. Beyond what Christendom lacked, we should not forget that it has performed great services to humanity. That a settled Europe was able to emerge out of the devastations and

depredations of the Barbarian Invasions is in no small part due to the role it played.

Its fall from grace was that it was not satisfied with being an intellectual power. In the shape of the Papacy, which formed its higher leadership, it believed it also had to be a temporal power, and so it became a temporal power as well. But with the effect that it, as such, became repeatedly embroiled in temporal dealings, and itself took sides within Christianity. And since at the same time, in the interest of fortifying its rule, it took to multiplying and refining its dogmas in order to become not just an intellectual power [*geistige Macht*] but a power *over* people's minds [*Macht über die Geister*], it itself provoked their contradiction, which eventually led to the schism in Christianity. Here we come upon an interesting phenomenon, which was already emphasised early on by enemies of the Roman Church. In 1417 in London, the very characterful Lollard Sir John Oldcastle was up before the court accused of heresy. When he was charged with having denied the dogma of transubstantiation—the doctrine of the transformation of the Eucharistic wine into the actual blood of Christ through the sanctifying word of the priest—he retorted that he could find nothing about such a transformation in the Gospels. The Church had evidently established this spiritualistic dogma after, instead of merely acting as an intellectual power, it had won material wealth and external power.

Shakespeare portrayed this Oldcastle, who was condemned to death by fire and was put to death in the most gruesome way, in the royal drama *Henry IV* as the drunk and *lumpen* drinking companion of the heir to the throne Henry—the later Henry V—based on the slanderous reports of his enemies. But, disabused of this view, he later changed the name in the drama to Sir John Falstaff, and explained in the epilogue to *Henry IV, Part 2*: "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man".[10]

To what dreadful wars and persecutions this *Machtpolitik* by the Papacy led is well-known. No country has suffered under them more than Germany. This experience in particular prompted the radical Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin to write in his work *God and the State*, which remained uncompleted, the statement that in general the struggle for speculative ideas and ideals tears people apart more and brings about more bloodshed than the pursuit of material interests. But this claim cannot be sustained in such an extreme form. Many wars that were apparently waged for the sake of religion had at the same time very real power- and property-interests as their driving motivation, and would hardly have been possible

without their working in close association [*Bundesgenossenschaft*]. Precisely the Wars of Reformation offer proof of this. Without the German princes having had a political interest in rising up against Rome, Luther would quite possibly have shared the fate of Jan Hus.[11] The princes, meanwhile, dared to take a stand against Rome because they knew how strongly Rome's intellectual influence had declined among the popular classes that they had to take into consideration. Here too, the absolute opposition of idea and interest leads to wrong conclusions.

Certainly, economic interest especially has proven itself one of the most effective levers of societal progress over the course of historical development. The one-sidednesses and excesses of economic liberalism cannot make one forget the great piece of truth that it contains. It was for its time a necessary, fruitful insight. The most significant innovations in the domain of production, which have made labour more bearable and created the preconditions of better remuneration and less drudgery for workers, owe their practical implementation to economic interest. The socialist too can acknowledge this, and nobody has expressed this more energetically than the founders of scientific socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Their *Communist Manifesto* begins with an enumeration of the revolutionary accomplishments in this sense of social progress by the class of capitalist business-owners, and in the third volume of his great work *Capital*, Marx still emphasises, however ungently he treats the capitalists there, the civilising effects of capital, that is, of capitalist production.

And what is to be said about economic liberalism also applies to political liberalism, or better put, since here it is not a matter of the *parties* who carry this name, to liberalism as a *worldview*. Yes, to a certain degree it is still true of it—of the idea of the right of all those who become capable of life against everything that is upheld by tradition. As an idea, liberalism has played the role of a tremendous emancipator in history; it has fertilised all the emancipatory movements that have given the civilised world a new countenance in the three centuries that lie behind us. Defended in the first instance by the rising modern bourgeoisie and its ideologues, its fundamental ideas have attained world-historical significance, stretching far beyond the class interests of this bourgeoisie. The French Revolution of the eighteenth century at its highest point gave them their classic expression in the famous *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, and our great German philosophers, with Johann Gottlieb Fichte at their head,

theoretically deepened them. In his *Addresses to the German Nation*—which the people who in our days bray about them the loudest would burn if they had bothered to read them and understand their meaning—Fichte called on the Germans to educate completely new human beings and construct a wholly new state system, which he sketches out in his ideas for a new speech, written in 1813, as an "empire of the right to freedom, founded on equality of all that bears a human face".[12] Fichte closes the thirteenth of his *Addresses to the German Nation* with the admonition to adhere to the gauge of greatness, that "great alone is that which is capable of, and inspired by, those ideas which always bring salvation to the peoples of the earth".[13] That contains the truth that humanity would be miserable [*armselig*] if it were only guided by interest, which, however, is fortunately an impossibility.

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein Papers, ARCH00042–A53, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
2. Moritz (Moses) Lazarus (1824–1903), German psychologist and Jewish ethicist, and Chajim Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899), German linguist and philosopher, together founders of *Völkerpsychologie* as a subdiscipline.
3. Jean-Gabriel de Tarde (1843–1904), French criminologist, social psychologist, and sociologist of imitation and innovation, foundational theorist of crowd dynamics and public opinion.
4. Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann (1822–1890), German businessman, classicist, and archaeologist, best known for his extensive work uncovering the ruins of the city of Troy (1870–1873) and Mycenae (1874–1876).
5. Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Part One', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, vol. 29: Marx 1857–1861* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 263.
6. Ibid.
7. Friedrich Schiller, 'The Philosophers', in Friedrich Schiller, *Poems of the Third Period* (Canton, OH: Pinnacle Press, 2017).
8. Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, David Leopold (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1845]).
9. Oswald Köhler, *Der Egoismus und die Zivilisation: Eine sozial-politische Erörterung* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz, 1884).
10. William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part Two*, Adrian Poole (ed.) (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 127.

11. Jan Hus (c. 1370–1415), Bohemian theologian, philosopher, and reformist preacher, burnt at the stake for heresy after refusing to renounce his teachings at the Council of Constance (1414–1418), inspiration of the radical-Reformationist Hussite movement (1419–1620).
12. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Staatslehre* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1820), IV, p. 423.
13. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, Gregory Moore (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 181.

CHAPTER 40

Who and What are Social Fascists?

On the Bolshevists' Method of Struggle

Unpublished manuscript, c. 1931.[1]

When we were still in our boyhood, at school my fellow-pupils and I learned and sang with reverence the verse by good old Ludwig Christoph Hölty:

> Be ever true and honest, 'til
> You lie cold 'neath the grassy sward;
> And never stray, not by one inch
> From th' holy ways of our dear Lord.[2]

But what are "the ways of the Lord"? About that there were all manner of different opinions among us, until one day our teacher explained to us: "What the ways of the Lord are you will find out from the catechism, where it spells the Ten Commandments out for you." He went through these with us, and of those that made a deeper impression on us one was not least the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour". That slandering one's fellow human beings is a dirty thing to do, even we schoolboys understood.

Yes, even schoolboys grasped it. After all, they had not yet had the Gospel according to Moscow drummed into them, according to which lies and slander belong to the political virtues of the Bolshevistically-minded communist in the struggle against those who politically think differently.

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In fact, it takes a fair amount of conceptual conditioning to get people to acquire a taste for Moscow's methods of political struggle, instead of turning away from them in profound disgust wherever they have become entrenched habits.

The political struggle against socialists who think differently [*andersdenkend*], as the Bolshevists wage it, is precisely anything but an intellectual struggle; it has nothing about it of a debate to stimulate people's minds regarding the application of scientific insights. Instead, it is *the exact opposite of this*, a mockery of all serious scientific thinking and judgment.

What, for example, is it supposed to mean when the Bolshevists christen German Social Democracy with the name "social fascists", which they deploy as a term of abuse? The word fascism comes from Italy, from *fasci* = *Faschi* (bundle), and is there the self-chosen name of a political association whose *method of struggle* and *political goals* have *nothing*, *absolutely nothing* in common with the political aspirations and method of struggle of German Social Democracy, but rather are their *exact opposite*. German Social Democracy fundamentally represents the demand for political *equality of rights* and *freedom of action* for all citizens of the state, and *self-government of the people* built on this right and this freedom. But fascism was and is in its home country of Italy a reactionary counter-organisation against national self-government constructed in this way. It is an organisation that in its beginnings drew on the Camorra, the Mafia, and similar conspiracies, which in the period before the World War up until the last decades of the nineteenth century had destabilised entire provinces of Italy through robberies, and which, under the impact of the heavy damages that the Italian economy suffered in the World War, sank to the level of *paid* confederate accomplices [*Helfershelfer*], led dictatorially by a central authority, of the *governments by violence* [*Gewaltregierungen*] that arose in Italy after the war.

What unprecedentedly brazen *fraudulence* it is to call the German social democrats "social fascists" is shown by the facts regarding the emergence and the nature of the fascist movement, which one can find detailed in an article "The Fascists" by Albin Michel, which appeared in the 13 November 1922 issue of the socialist weekly *Die Glocke*.[3] There, he emphasises how great a role the *crass ambition of individuals* who believed they were called to be leaders played in the rise of fascism, and it continues:

> At the same time, it should certainly also be borne in mind that the fascist movement *is supported very strongly with money* by industrial capitalists and

> major landowners. These capitalists and major landowners, who aspire to the *destruction of the political and trade-union workers' movement*, *cooperatives*, *etc.*, are perhaps the *only ones* in the fascist movement who actually properly know what they want and what they are spending their money for.

And the article closes:

> It is possible that fascism will hold its own in Italy for some while longer, indeed that it temporarily expands its reach still further, but viewed retrospectively at a later time and from over a greater timeframe, this movement will hardly be seen as a political one. It will find its place in history among the ranks of the other intellectual aberrations—among the flagellants and similar phenomena of human obliquity.

The editors of the *Glocke* comment on this that it seems to them that one should not underestimate the significance of fascism too much. In its intellectual origin it shows "a deeper kinship with the *Hungarian* or *Bavarian reaction*." In Hungary as well as Bavaria,

> short-lived Bolshevist chaos had prepared the ground for counter-revolutionary coercive tyranny, which based itself on *terror by armed bands* (Awakening Hungarians, *Orgesch*).[4]

One may have different opinions about the causes of the reaction in Bavaria and Hungary; but the fact that these countries had a brutally-expressed political reaction, which Hungary still has, is undisputed. And it is indisputable that the system of government in reactionary Hungary and fascist Italy stands in the starkest contradiction to the liberal [*freiheitlich*] system of government implemented by Social Democracy where it has a majority. Rather, *intimately and essentially related* to it, right up to the individual details of its brutal policy of violation [*Vergewaltigungspolitik*], is the governmental system of the Russian Bolshevists.

Wherever one looks in Russia, one finds examples of outrageous oppression of people's views, fleshed out into a system just like the one that the fascists' government exercises in Italy. Here as well as there, the elementary conditions of healthy political life in the country have been *eradicated* in a highly sophisticated way. There is no talk anymore of even only reasonably free discussion of significant questions of the country's politics. From on high it is prescribed to the people not only how they have to think or even how to make judgments, but even what they are allowed to

see and what they are obliged *not to see*. In his obsessive craving to play the part of *Providence* for his nation at all costs, *gospodin* Stalin is in no way different from *signore* Mussolini.

Notes

1. Eduard Bernstein Papers, ARCH00042–A107, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
2. Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty (1748–1776), German popular poet. The quoted lines are the opening of Hölty's poem "Der alte Landmann an seinen Sohn [The old farmer to his son]", generally seen as the epitome of Prussian virtues.
3. Albin Michel (1874–1943), French publisher.
4. Awakening Hungarians [*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete*] was an antisemitic far-right organisation founded in 1918, which thrived in opposition to the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic; dissolved in 1922, its members either joined the fascist Arrow Cross Party or became supporters of Admiral Miklós Horthy's national-conservative régime. The *Organisation Escherich* (*Orgesch*), also known as the Citizens' Defence [*Einwohnerwehr*] were a far-right German paramilitary group founded in 1918 and dissolved in 1921, whose members eventually merged into the *Stahlhelm*, the paramilitary wing of the national-conservative German National People's Party [*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*].

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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